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# OUR NATIVE LAND,

OR

SCENES AND SKETCHES

FROM BRITISH HISTORY,

FOR YOUNG PEOPLE.

*Engl. Land*

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"SCRIPTURAL INSTRUCTION FOR THE LEAST AND THE LOWEST,"

"LESSONS ON THE METALS OF THE BIBLE," &c.

VOLUME I.

SEELEY, JACKSON, AND HALLIDAY, FLEET STREET ;

AND B. SEELEY, HANOVER STREET ;

LONDON : MDCCCLV.

*226. C. 82.*

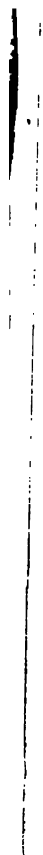




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## OUR NATIVE LAND.

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### I.

Breathes there a man, with soul so dead,  
Who never to himself hath said,  
This is my own, my native land?  
Whose heart hath ne'er within him burn'd,  
As home his footsteps he hath turn'd,  
From wand'ring in a foreign strand? —SCOTT.

CAN there be any English children who do not love their country,—who do not rejoice to remember that they *are* English children? If any such there be, I fear it must be said that they are either very careless, or very ungrateful:—careless, not to notice the many blessings which surround them: or ungrateful, not thankfully to acknowledge those blessings.

The love of our native country is a feeling natural to us, almost as natural as the love of our parents, and our relatives, and our friends: and it is a right and a proper feeling. We

must not suppose that only English people love their country. We shall find the same affection in all other parts of the world. The Swiss among his rocky mountains, the Arab in his burning desert, even the Greenlander in his frozen plains, all love their native land, the home where they live, and where their fathers lived before them. And though we are often inclined to think one country much pleasanter than another, and to pity those who live in less favoured spots than we do, yet, perhaps, the Swiss, and the Arab, and the Negro, and the Greenlander, could each find reason for preferring *his* native land, and would not wish to change it if he might. For we must remember that, after all, it is not so much the place itself, as the people and the things of that place, which give the charm to those who live there. And then, as tastes and wants vary in different countries, what may be very unpleasant to people living in Europe, may be very agreeable to people living in Asia, or Africa, or America.

But where to find the happiest spot below,  
Who can direct, where all pretend to know ?  
The shivering tenant of the frigid zone,  
Boldly proclaims that happiest spot his own ;  
Extols the treasures of his stormy seas,  
And his long nights of revelry and ease.  
The naked negro, panting at the Line,  
Boasts of his golden sands and palmy vine,

Basks in the glare, or stems the tepid wave,  
And thanks his gods for all the good they gave.  
Such is the patriot's boast, where'er we roam,  
His first, best country, ever is at home.  
And yet, perhaps, if countries we compare,  
And estimate the blessings which they share,  
Though patriots flatter, still shall wisdom find  
An equal portion dealt to all mankind ;  
As different good, by art or nature given,  
To different nations, makes their blessings even.

GOLDSMITH.

But all this refers to *physical* blessings and comforts,—to those which have to do only with the body ; and they are so wisely and so mercifully distributed through the world, by Him who has created all nations, and fixed the bounds of their habitations, and given them those very things which are best suited to their wants, that we may indeed say He has made their “blessings even.” But there are other blessings far more valuable and important than these : and when we think of *them* we shall find that there is a great difference indeed in the various nations of the world. I mean the blessings of knowledge, and civilization, and particularly of religion. In those pretty lines which you have just read, the native of one land is said by the Poet to extol his long dark nights of ease and idleness : and the inhabitants of another to boast in its warm climate, and the delicious fruits it yields, and then to thank his gods for the good things

they give him ;—idol-gods, because, poor man, he knows not the true God from whom come the sun-shine, and the rain, and the fruitful seasons, to fill our hearts with joy and gladness. Many a beautiful land is without these higher blessings, the people still wild and barbarous, not knowing how to find true happiness even in this world, and quite ignorant of the way to eternal happiness in the world to come. Ah, when we look around, North and South, and East and West, we shall see reason indeed to rejoice that our lot is fixed in happy England.

And why do I call England a happy land ? Not because of its beauty, and its fruitfulness, and its climate : there are other countries that surpass it in all these things. Not because it is rich and powerful, and has possessions in almost all parts of the world. There have been other nations, once as great as England, which were very far from being happy countries, for they were destroyed, and passed away, and are only known now in the history of former times. Then why is England happy ? I will give you three reasons why I think we may say she is so.

First, England is a land of freedom. But by this I do not, of course, mean that all the people who live here may do just what they please, and be as idle as they like, or as mis-

chievous as they like, without fear of blame or punishment. Such freedom as that would make a country miserable, not happy. I dare say you can remember one land that was in a sad state of disorder and wretchedness, because every one was left to do just "what was right in his own eyes." The freedom of England is very different from this. It is the liberty which those enjoy who live under wise and good laws, —laws made to prevent oppression, and injustice, and crime ; laws which protect the innocent, and punish the guilty ; laws which affect every person in the country, of whatever station he may be ; so that the poor have the benefit of them as well as the rich, and the mean and humble just as much as the great and powerful. This kind of freedom, which is the result of good laws, is surely one thing that leads to the happiness of a country.

The second reason why I think England is a happy country, is, that she is a land where true religion, the religion of the Bible, is known and established. I do not mean that all the people in this country are really religious people, and living according to the commands the Bible gives them ;—this unhappily is not the case. But still the knowledge of true religion is very general, and the Bible is very widely circulated, and no one need be ignorant who wishes to know the truth. Now



it is the knowledge and the practice of what the Bible teaches, that leads to true happiness in nations, and in families, and in individuals. In some countries, this precious book is forbidden by the very law of the land, and the people are punished if they dare to disobey that law. Oh, how thankful we should be for the privilege we enjoy of living in a country where every body may learn to read the Bible, and where every body may have a Bible to read !

The last reason I will give you for thinking that England is a happy country is this—that she sends the knowledge of true religion, and of the Bible, far and wide, into almost all the nations of the world. If you know any thing of true happiness, you must know that it has nothing to do with selfishness. A selfish man, or woman, or child, cannot be happy. And, on the contrary, those who try to do good, to be kind to others, to be useful to all around them, are and must be happy. Now it is England's happiness, and her honour too, thus to be useful in the best possible way, to thousands and thousands of people living in distant parts of the globe. And how is this ? God has, in His providence, given much power to England, large possessions, great wealth, much knowledge of all kinds. But if these things were used only to

increase our own luxuries and enjoyments here, without bestowing any portion of them on others far away, we should be like those great nations of former days, Tyre, and Babylon, and Nineveh, and many more which were, as I said before, not happy, because their selfishness, and their general wickedness, brought down God's anger upon them, and led at last to their destruction. But the knowledge of the religion of the Bible has taught Christians in England, that all the good things we possess so abundantly—wealth, knowledge, power, dominion—are given not for ourselves only, but for the benefit of others. And so, many a plan has been contrived, and carried out, to send knowledge and civilization to ignorant and heathen nations in foreign climes;—to send the Bible and the Missionary, and money to build churches and schools, and to pay instructors for teaching poor idolators the way to be happy now, and happy for ever. But do not think that we have yet done all that we ought. No; there is much, very much, to be done still; and every one of us who really loves his country, should try to assist in this work, because it not only benefits people abroad, but it actually adds to our happiness and blessings at home that greatest of all luxuries—the luxury of doing good.

And now, will you not agree with me that

England is a happy country, and that we may well rejoice that our lot is fixed in such a favoured land? Well then, if you do, there are two things which you must bear in mind. First, we should be thankful for these blessings; and secondly, we should make a good use of them. We should be thankful to Him whose kindness has placed us here; for it was not accident and chance that made us English people, but the over-ruling care and providence of God. And then, we must not forget, that just in proportion to our privileges is our responsibility. "To whom much is given, of them much will be required;" and He who has given us such an abundance of good things, will assuredly call us to account for the use we make of them. Let us remember that they are talents to be employed for His glory; blessings to be improved by ourselves; and opportunities to be used for the benefit of our fellow-creatures.

## II. NINETEEN HUNDRED YEARS AGO.

—What a goodly prospect spreads around,  
Of hills, and dales, and woods, and lawns, and spires,  
And glittering towns, and gilded streams, till all  
The stretching landscape into smoke decays !  
Happy Britannia ! where the queen of arts,  
Inspiring vigour, liberty, abroad  
Walks unconfin'd, ev'n to the farthest cot,  
And scatters plenty with unsparing hand.

THOMSON.


BUT England was not always the happy country that is here described. While we pity the ignorance and barbarism of other nations, we should remember that time was when our own beloved land was as ignorant and as barbarous as those nations are now.—Nineteen hundred years ago ! Shall we look back through that long period, and see what England was before the first conquerors landed on her shores ?

If you glance at a map of the Roman Empire, as it was in its best and most flourishing state, you will see how very different the countries and divisions of Europe were at that time from what they are in the present day. The

greater part of the known world was then under the ruling power of Rome. Country after country was added ; till at last, almost the whole of Europe, much of Asia, and the northern portion of Africa, were included in the large dominions of that mighty empire. But there was one little part of this territory which, for a long time, gave great trouble to the Roman conquerors, and bravely resisted their efforts and their arms. If we look to the north west of this map, we shall see, not far from the coast of France, or Gaul as it was then called, two islands, one larger than the other, and separated from it by no very wide extent of sea. Now the shape and situation of these islands are so familiar to us, that, though their names here are not the same that we are accustomed to see marked on them in modern maps of Europe, we feel quite sure that they can be no other than our own beloved England, and her sister country Ireland. We must, however, for the present, call England by her old name, one which still sounds dear to us,—Britannia.

And now, before we begin to talk about the Roman conquerors who fought against the brave islanders, and took possession of their sea-bound home, let us land here ourselves, and see what our country was, and what its inhabitants were, nineteen hundred years ago.

We shall not, of course, expect to find railways, and steam-carriages, nor even turnpike roads and stage-coaches, in such early days;—these were the useful inventions of much more modern times. Neither must we be surprised if we see no cultivated grounds, no parks and gardens, no corn-fields and rich meadows; for the hardy people of Britain then had little inclination and taste for such quiet employments as gardening, and planting, and sowing, and tilling the land. The country, however beautiful it might have been in parts, was full of barren plains and dark forests; and in those forests were certain wild beasts, which have long since been driven away, but which were then too well known, and which did great mischief when they left their hiding-places, and went out to seek their prey:—I mean the wolves. And then the people;—what were they? Not the civilized, industrious, intelligent men and women, that England can show now, living under good laws, quietly and peacefully; going through their employments day after day, happy in themselves, and useful to others. No;—but a nation of wild and rude barbarians, clothed only in the skins of beasts, or with their bodies stained blue with the juice of woad. Those who lived at the south-east part of the country near to the coast of Gaul, were the most



civilized, and they attended a little to the cultivation of the soil. But most of the inhabitants of the other parts, dwelt in huts by the side of their forests and marshes, and often roamed about from place to place to seek fresh pasture for their cattle. The country at that time was not governed by one sovereign only; it was divided into many separate states or kingdoms; and these little states and their rulers were continually quarrelling one with another; so that the Britons knew something of the art of war, though they were ignorant of most other arts.

But I must now tell you something about the religion of the Britons in those times, and a sad account indeed it will be. The ministers or priests of the people were called Druids. They were the best instructed and the most clever of the inhabitants; but they made a bad use of the power which their knowledge gave them over the poor ignorant people around. The Druids taught that there was one supreme God, and that the soul was immortal; and, so far, their religion was true; but then they added a great deal of what was false, and foolish, and wicked. They thought that besides this one great God, there were others under him,—a god of war, a god of thunder, a goddess of victory; and they are said to have also worshipped the idol Baal, of

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which we read so often in the Bible, and to have passed people through the fire in honour of him, as, you remember, some of the wicked kings mentioned in Scripture used to do. The Britons too, were taught some very strange things about the soul. They believed that, first of all, it existed in some little insect; and that then it passed into some larger animal,—a bird, perhaps, or a fish: and that so it went from one body to another, gradually becoming more and more intelligent, until at last, it was honoured by entering into a man, and then it had reason, and became capable of knowing right from wrong. Though the Britons thought rightly that people would be rewarded or punished hereafter, according to their conduct here, yet their ideas of a future world were very different indeed from what the Bible teaches; and as to the only way in which we may be happy after death,—of *that* they knew nothing.

The Druids, I told you, made a bad use of their power over the people. What they thought of most, was their own profit. They determined to be paid for what they did, and for what they taught. What a selfish principle of action that was! How different from the spirit of the gospel, and from the spirit of the Apostle of the gospel, who said to his people, "I seek not yours, but you."



On one day of the year, all the people in Britain were commanded to put out their fires, and these fires were to be rekindled by a spark from the sacred fire of the Druids. But if any person had not paid, during the year, all that the Druids required, they refused to give him a spark ; and as his neighbours were also forbidden to give him any, the poor man might perish with cold, unless he paid all the debt due to the selfish priest.

The Druids were the magistrates, as well as the priests, of the Britons, but they did not act towards the people according to right rules of law and justice. One way in which they pretended to discover whether a person was innocent or guilty was this :—They placed great stones one upon another in such a manner, that, if the upper one was touched in a particular part, it would not move, but if it was touched in any other part, it began to rock directly. The person to be tried was made to place his hand on this stone ; and the Druids pretended that the gods would show, by its moving or not moving, whether the person was guilty or innocent ; but as the cunning priests directed the person where to put his hand, it was in their power to condemn or to acquit him as they themselves thought fit.

There was a plant very much honoured by the people in Britain in those days, called the

mistletoe. Indeed, it is a plant which we honour too in our times, for we often use it to deck our rooms, and houses, and churches, at Christmas ; and though in itself, it is a pale, cold, sickly-looking plant, yet it forms a pretty contrast to the red berries of the holly, and the glossy leaves of the laurel with which we mix it in our winter garlands. When the mistletoe was seen growing on an oak-tree, where it is not often found, the Druids used to go to the spot, to offer sacrifice, and to hold a feast. Two white bulls were fastened by their horns to the tree ; one priest ascended the branches, and with a golden knife cut off the plant : then those below received it in a white woollen cloth, and preserved it with great care. They poured water upon it ; and this water they thought very good for sick people, and for cattle. The bulls were killed, part of their flesh was burnt in sacrifice, and the priests, and the person who gave the offerings, feasted on the rest with their friends. How different all this is from those sacred associations, which we have with that time of year in which we gather our mistletoe ! It is then that we celebrate the birth of Him who came to offer for us the only sacrifice which can take away sin ; and we are reminded that the sacrifice *we* are to offer now is not such as our poor ignorant forefathers were

taught to offer, but one of praise and thankfulness for all the many blessings we enjoy.

But I have not told you yet the worst part of the religion of the ancient Britons. They sometimes offered even *human* sacrifices. When a chief was sick, or when some great trouble or danger was feared, or when they were preparing for war, they used to offer up a human being to their false gods ; and they thought that this sacrifice would save the life of the sick man, or avert the calamity from them, or give good success to their arms in battle. And then sometimes they did what was more dreadful still. A large figure, like a man, was made of wicker-work ; into this were put people condemned to be punished for their crimes ; but if they were not enough to fill it, others were forced in also, however innocent they might be, and then wood or straw was put around the image, and it was set on fire, and all perished together in the flames !

Such was the state of Britain nineteen hundred years ago ! How different from the state of England now ! But from all that we have been saying, may we not find a useful lesson for ourselves ? I think we may, and it is a lesson of humility. When we look at the prosperity of our own happy country, we sometimes feel not only thankful, which is right,



but, perhaps, proud, which is wrong. We forget who made England what she is, and give the praise of her greatness to man, as if it were *his* wisdom and power that raised her to this state of prosperity. You remember the king of whom we read in Scripture, who said of his city, "Is not this great Babylon which I have builded?" and you remember too how his pride was humbled, that he might learn to give the honour to whom it was due. Now, in order to check this feeling of pride, it is well to look back to the *beginning* of things, as we have just been doing in the history of our own country. The greatest countries, the greatest men, the greatest things, were not *always* great. They had a beginning, and that beginning was very small indeed. The large oak in the forest was not at first what it is now. It sprang from a little acorn,

"A cup and ball which babes might play with,"

and many a long year passed before it reached its present height. The largest building we ever saw or heard of, had its beginning in a few stones laid upon the ground. The most learned, and the wisest man that ever lived, since the time of Adam, was once a helpless infant, without strength of body or power of mind. And so the greatest and most prosperous countries were at first—as we have seen

Britain was nineteen hundred years ago—ignorant, and wild, and uncivilized.

But why should the remembrance of all this make us humble? Because these things shew us that it is God, not man, who has brought great ends out of all these small beginnings, and therefore man can have nothing to boast of. Who was it that made the little acorn take root in the ground, and watched over the young plant, and fed it with rain and sunshine till it grew up to be a great tree in the forest? Who was it that furnished the materials for the great building,—the wood, and the stones, and the iron, and many more necessary things,—and then gave men strength and skill to erect it? Who was it that took care of the little infant, and preserved it from danger, and gave it power to learn and understand, and means and opportunities of becoming wise? And who was it that so ordered all the events of our own country, during these nineteen hundred years, as to bring it from what it was *then*, to what it is *now*? There is only one answer to all these questions,—it was God. As we trace the history of Britain, step by step, year after year, century after century, we shall find many opportunities of observing the truth of what I have been saying. We shall see that man's endeavours could have done nothing but God's over-ruling Providence. When-

ever we read history, we should carefully mark this ; and in every event we shall see fresh proof of Divine wisdom and goodness, and fresh cause for humility and thankfulness.

### III. THE FIRST CONQUEST.

B.C. 55—A.D. 50.

Bold were the Britons, who, the careless sons  
Of Nature, roam'd the forest-bounds, at once  
Their verdant city, high-embowering fane,  
And the gay circle of their woodland wars.  
\* \* \* \* \* Witness, Rome,  
Who saw'st thy Cæsar, from the naked land,  
Whose only fort was British hearts, repell'd,  
To seek Pharsalian wreaths. Witness the toil,  
The blood of ages, bootless to secure,  
Beneath an empire's yoke, a stubborn isle,  
Disputed hard, and never quite subdued.

THOMSON.

We almost wonder that the Romans, so great and powerful as they were, and with such large possessions, should have given any thought at all to this little country—"this stubborn isle," as the poet calls it. And perhaps the Britons themselves thought they were quite safe, far distant as they were from those mighty conquerors. Britain was not much known at that time to the rest of the world. The Phœnicians indeed were accustomed to go there for tin, a metal which was

very abundant, as it is still, in this country, particularly in the mines of Cornwall. The account which those who had visited Britain gave of the people, and of their habits and manners, was not likely to induce others to go and see them, as you may suppose from what I told you in our last chapter. And then these travellers very probably represented the Britons to be worse than they really were, more wild, and fierce, and barbarous. But yet, notwithstanding all this, the Romans determined to add Britain to their other conquests.

The great Roman general, Julius Cæsar, had just been gaining some victories in Gaul near to the British shores, and there was a tempting opportunity for him to make an attack upon this island ; so with his ships and soldiers he crossed the narrow sea that divides this country from France, and landed on the coast of what we now call Kent.

We may suppose how astonished the Britons were when they saw all those armed soldiers sailing towards their shores, and then actually landing, and marching into the country ! They were alarmed too as well as surprised ; for they soon found, when the Romans began their attack, that they could not easily drive away enemies so much more powerful than themselves, and so superior to them in



skill and arms. They made a brave resistance ; but, as was to be expected, Julius Cæsar had very much the advantage over them ; he made them promise submission and obedience to the Romans, and then left them for a time, as it was near winter, and returned to Gaul. But next year he came again. Meanwhile the Britons, who had never been accustomed to submit to foreign conquerors, had broken their promises of submission and obedience, and had quite determined to fight with the Romans with all their might for their liberty and independence. So war began again. The Britons were united under one of their kings whose name was Cassivelaunus. But Julius Cæsar soon conquered him, marched up the country, passed the river Thames, and took and burnt the capital of the defeated king. Then he made the Britons again promise submission ; and so he left them, and went back again to Gaul.

But the Romans had as yet by no means subdued our “stubborn isle ;” and as other conquests, and other business, and disputes and troubles in his own country, prevented Julius Cæsar from returning to Britain, our brave forefathers were left to enjoy liberty for some time. Nearly a century passed away, and then indeed the war with the Romans *was renewed*. Julius Cæsar had passed away,

and so also had the soldiers who had so often fought with him. Another emperor was ruling over Rome, and other generals and soldiers were sent to conquer Britain. The name of the Roman emperor then was Claudius, and the general whom he sent was Ostorius Scapula.


Some of the British princes were, as I told you before, very brave men. Cassivelaunus of course was no more : he, like his conqueror, had gone into that unseen world "where the wicked cease from troubling," where "the prisoners rest together, and hear not the voice of the oppressor." How sad to think that neither the conqueror nor the conquered knew any thing of that better world, to which the souls of those who have sought for it while on earth, depart, when the poor bodies are laid in the dust !

One of the British kings at the time of which we are now speaking, was Caractacus. He ruled over the Silures, a warlike tribe who lived on the banks of the Severn. Their country now forms a part of Wales. This brave prince, after fighting as long as he was able, to defend his country, was defeated by the Roman general, taken prisoner, and sent to Rome. What a change for this humble British prince, accustomed as he had been to *rule over only* a little portion of a nation still

almost barbarous, to find himself in the midst of the greatest and most civilized city in the world ! He could feel the change, for though he was ignorant, yet he was a thoughtful man ; —he had learnt to observe, and to reflect, and to compare, and had he enjoyed the blessings of education, and lived in times of peace, instead of being obliged to fight for himself and his country, he might have been a happy and useful ruler over his subjects in Britain, instead of a prisoner in the city of Rome.

As Caractacus was led through the streets and public places of Rome, and all the people gazed upon him as he passed along, he could not help crying out, in his surprise at what he saw, “ How can a people possessed of such magnificence at home, envy me my humble cottage in Britain ! ” I am sure you will be glad to hear that this brave man was kindly and honourably treated by his conquerors, and that they afterwards restored him to the liberty for which he had so nobly fought.

Now I think that there was much wisdom in this exclamation of the captive king, and that it is one from which we may learn something useful, though it came from an ignorant, perhaps an almost savage man. It may teach us these two things ;—first, that happiness *may be found* in very humble circumstances ; *and secondly, that greatness cannot give con-*




tentment. Caractacus, in his little cottage, while in peace, with his family and people about him, though he had few of what *we* think the necessities, and none of the comforts and luxuries of life, was yet happy, as far as a person can be who knows only the enjoyments of *this* world; for poor Caractacus was of course ignorant of any higher happiness in another. But the Romans, with all their power, and all their grandeur, could not rest contented with their great possessions. They were always trying to add to them,—to increase their wealth and greatness; and this ambition led to much trouble, much calamity, and loss of life both in wars abroad, and in disputes at home; so that the Romans, with all their greatness, could not be called happy.

Now, would it not be wise to strive after a spirit of contentment? But you may ask, how can we get it? I think I can tell you; but first of all, we will try to find out the causes of *discontent*, and then the remedy. One cause is idleness. We are all made for activity. God did not put his creatures into the world merely to eat, and drink, and sleep; but to be up and doing. The animals even may teach us this. The birds, and the insects, the bee and the ant for instance, how busy they are! Even the gay butterfly is doing *something* in the few days of its short life; at

all events it is not *inactive*. And all creatures find pleasure and enjoyment in the exercise of the powers their Maker has bestowed. Then let us learn from them not to be slothful, but busy and active, and whatever our hand finds to do, let us do it with all our might. You will find this an excellent way of keeping off discontent. Idle people with nothing to do, have time to think about the little disagreeables of daily life; they become discontented just because they have no employment to draw their attention to better and pleasanter things. Active busy people have no time to spare for complaints; you will seldom find *them* discontented.

But then, however busy we may be, we should not work only for ourselves. This brings me to another cause of discontent,—selfishness; but I said something about this in our first chapter; so I will only add now, that those who labour merely for their own gratification, will not be found much more happy, or much less discontented, than those who do nothing at all. If you try the experiment yourselves, or ask others who have tried it, I think you will find the truth of what I say.

But the chief cause of discontent is an *unquiet conscience*; the feeling that there is *something wrong* within, in our own hearts



and tempers. A person who has committed some fault, or who is indulging some evil disposition, must be uncomfortable in himself; and then he often begins to charge his misery upon the people or things about him, and so he grows discontented with his state and his circumstances, and the place in which he lives; forgetting all the time that the great cause of his unhappiness is *himself*. The true remedy then for discontent, is peace of mind, peace of conscience;—and how can this be obtained? The British king, who has led us to all these lessons about contentment, could not have answered such a question; but *we* may. We are indeed often doing wrong, and we have within us corrupt natures which continually bring upon us first sin, and then sorrow, which always follows sin. But happily we are not ignorant of the way in which our wrong actions may be forgiven, and our evil natures changed. The Bible shows us this, a book which had not found its way into this country in the days of Caractacus. If we study that book in the right spirit, and with a real desire to be the better for what we read, we shall learn how to become contented and happy, and have far greater cause for being so than the brave king had in his quiet humble cottage in Britain.

#### IV. THE WARRIOR QUEEN.

A.D. 59.

When the British warrior-queen,  
Bleeding from the Roman rods,  
Sought with an indignant mien,  
Counsel of her country's gods ;  
Sage, beneath the spreading oak,  
Sat the Druid, hoary chief ;  
Ev'ry burning word he spoke,  
Full of rage, and full of grief.

' Princess, if our aged eyes  
Weep upon thy matchless wrongs,  
'Tis because resentment ties  
All the terrors of our tongues.  
Rome shall perish ;—write that word  
In the blood that she has spilt ;  
Perish, hopeless and abhorr'd,  
Deep in ruin and in guilt.

' Rome, for empire far renown'd,  
Tramples on a thousand states ;  
Soon her pride shall kiss the ground.—  
Hark ! the Gaul is at her gates !  
Other Romans shall arise,  
Heedless of a soldier's name ;  
*Sounds, not arms, shall win the prize,  
Harmony the path to fame.*

'Then the progeny that springs  
From the forests of our land,  
Arm'd with thunder, clad with wings,  
Shall a wider world command.  
Regions Cæsar never knew,  
Thy posterity shall sway ;  
Where his eagles never flew ;  
None invincible as they.'

Such the bard's prophetic words,  
Pregnant with celestial fire,  
Bending, as he swept the chords  
Of his sweet but awful lyre.  
She, with all a monarch's pride,  
Felt them in her bosom glow ;  
Rush'd to battle, fought, and died,  
Dying, hurl'd them at the foe.—COWPER.

AFTER reading these lines, you will expect the subject of our chapter to-day to be somewhat sad, and indeed the story of Queen Boadicea *is* a sad one. I must tell you, however, that, all that is mentioned in this spirited little poem is not strictly true. The poet has taken the principal facts of the history for an outline, and then he has filled up the picture according to his own imagination. This is often done in poetry, and it is quite allowable, because, as everybody expects poetry to be more highly coloured than prose, none are, or need be, deceived by that colouring. The best plan is to read the account in both ways, when this can be done ; I mean in prose and in poetry *too*, and then, by comparing the two, we may



find what is fact, and what is fiction ; and have the pleasure of enjoying the poet's imagery, as well as of gaining knowledge from the historian's narration.

You remember, I hope, in what state we left the Romans and the Britons, at the close of the last chapter. Caractacus had been defeated and taken prisoner, but the "stubborn isle" was still far from "subdued." A few years after, therefore, another attempt was made upon Britain by the Romans, and the commander of the expedition this time was Suetonius Paulinus.


I should tell you, that, in their previous conquests, the Romans had acquired some territory for themselves in Britain, and had made settlements and colonies in different parts of the country. One of these was London. Can you imagine the spot where our great capital city now stands, actually in the possession of foreign conquerors? Yet so it was. Many of the defeated Britons had taken refuge in a little island, just off their Western coast, called Mona. When you observe its situation on the map, you will recognize it directly as our well known Anglesea,—an island now joined to the Welsh coast, as you are no doubt aware, by a beautiful suspension-bridge. In the *ancient times of which we are speaking, Mona was considered as a sacred spot. It was the*

chief residence of the Druids ; there they had their groves of oak, and their altars, and their sacrifices ; and there they gave their advice to the poor misguided people who consulted them, and delivered their instructions, as the Druid sage is said to have done to Queen Boadicea, in the lines at the head of the chapter. These instructions were usually given in verse ; for the Druids were not only the priests and the magistrates, but also the bards, or poets, and even the supposed prophets of the country. But to return to our story.

Suetonius, the Roman commander, was a fierce and cruel soldier, and he determined to overcome the poor Britons by any means, however bloody and savage those means might be. He resolved therefore to make an attack upon Mona, and to destroy that strong-hold of the Druids, hoping the more easily to overcome the rest of the country. So he led his army to the little island. And a sad, sad day in ancient British history was that, on which the Romans landed on the shores of Mona. The poor natives rushed to the sea-side to try to drive back the foe ; the women ran to and fro shrieking wildly ; and the Druids themselves might be seen preparing to resist their enemies, and actually kindling the fire on their altars to sacrifice those whom they hoped to *take captive* ! Even the bold Roman soldiers

were terrified at the dreadful sight ; and perhaps, had they been left to themselves, they would have gone away from Mona, and given up the attempt of taking it altogether ; but Suetonius urged them on, and scorned all their superstitious fears. And so they landed, and conquered ; and then the work of destruction began. Many were slain,—men, women, and children ;—the sacred groves, and the abodes of the priests, were thrown down, and the Druids themselves were burnt upon the very altars on which they had intended to sacrifice their enemies !

And now shall we pause a moment, and try to find some lesson for ourselves, as we gaze on this sad picture ? You must not suppose, from what I am going to say, that I at all wish to justify or excuse the cruelty of the Romans ; but yet when we remember what the Druids themselves were, and how they had acted towards the poor ignorant people in their power, we can scarcely forbear thinking that their destruction was a just punishment, inflicted upon them by God for their own former cruelty. They had more knowledge than the other inhabitants of Britain ; and we have seen how they used it ; not for the good of their fellow-men, but for the gratification of their own selfish and covetous desires. And then, you *cannot have forgotten* how much blood those



Druids had shed. The altars, and the human sacrifices, and the wicker image filled with men and women, and even with little innocent children,—all these things start up in our minds as often as we think of the ancient Druids. It is true they were ignorant of that religion which would have told them how wicked all this was ; but even ignorance cannot excuse the deeds they committed : and besides, we should remember that, in most cases, ignorance itself is a sin. God has given to all some light in their conscience, and some opportunity of learning the truth ; and even the Druids were not quite destitute of these. Then, when we see their own cruelty thus fearfully turned upon themselves, let us remember, that there is a God who watches over the nations of the earth, and who knows all they do ; and that He sometimes employs even wicked men as His instruments to punish the sin of others. We have a striking instance of this in the Bible, where we read of Nebuchadnezzar being raised up by God to execute His judgments upon Tyre and upon Egypt.

But all this time I dare say you are wishing to know who Boadicea was, and what part she took in these dreadful deeds. Boadicea was queen of the Iceni, a tribe that inhabited the Eastern part of Britain. She was, as you read *in the verses at the beginning of the chapter,*

a "warrior queen." She had fought with the Romans, and they had treated her with great cruelty, and her fierce spirit was stirred up to revenge. The poet, you remember, supposes that she went with feelings of this kind to her Druid priest, for counsel and direction; and that in his reply, which was given in verse to the music of his lyre, he excited her to vengeance, and at the same time consoled her by a prophecy of Britain's future greatness. We cannot, of course, believe that the Druid was endowed with the spirit of prophecy, though no doubt he was actuated by the spirit of revenge; and if Boadicea really did consult him, he most likely urged her on to fight and conquest. However this may have been, we know from history, that the "warrior queen" actually gathered her forces together; and while Suetonius and the Roman soldiers were engaged in the work of destruction in the island of Mona, she made an attack upon the Roman colony in London, burnt the city, and destroyed about 70,000 of the inhabitants. Suetonius soon heard of what Boadicea had done, and hastened back to oppose her. He could not indeed save London, but he took dreadful revenge on the Britons in the battle that followed; 80,000 of them were killed; and it is said that Boadicea, in order that she might not fall into the cruel hands of

the Romans, put an end to her life by swallowing poison.

So perished Boadicea, the brave queen of the Iceni! We must pity her misfortunes, and we may admire her courage in defending her country; but there is much of which we, as Christians, cannot approve in the conduct of this heathen queen. Cruelty, revenge, self-murder,—were indeed thought to be not crimes but virtues, among the pagan nations of old. Revenge taken upon an enemy was considered right, and proper, and just; and self-murder was esteemed honourable, when it was the only way to avoid the disgrace of being taken and killed by the savage conqueror. Ah, how different all this is from the spirit of the gospel, and from the spirit of Him who taught that gospel! His command was, "Love your enemies;" and he left a noble example of true Christian fortitude to his followers, when "he was reviled," and "reviled not again," and "when he suffered," and "threatened not." And many of his disciples imitated that example. These early Christian heroes patiently bore all the torments that their persecutors could inflict, even martyrdom itself,—rather than avoid those sufferings, by putting an end to their own lives, and so breaking the command which says, "*Thou shalt not kill.*" There was much more real courage,

much more true fortitude, in their patient endurance, than in the passionate despair of the "warrior queen." But then we must remember, that such conduct is not natural to man. It is only when the influence of true Christianity is felt in the heart, that we see such bright examples of these meek and gentle graces, as the early martyrs exhibited. It was in them the result of that blessed gospel which came from Him, whose name is "Love,"—which was first published by "the Prince of Peace," and then sealed even with his own blood.

## V. BRIGHTER DAYS IN BRITAIN.

A.D. 70—200.

All nature is but art, unknown to thee ;  
All chance, direction which thou canst not see ;  
All discord, harmony not understood ;  
All partial evil, universal good.—POPE.


DID it occur to you, while reading the sad account of the conquest of our beloved country by the Romans, that that conquest might after all be for the good, and not for the injury of Britain? Perhaps not: and therefore I have chosen these lines as our motto for to-day's chapter, and I hope you will soon be able to see their truth, and to apply them in a higher and better sense, than that which was intended by the poet himself.

A few more years have passed away. Other emperors have ruled over Rome, and other governors have been sent to try once more to subdue the "stubborn isle." And at last, Britain *is almost* subdued. During the reigns of the Roman emperors Vespasian, Titus, and Domitian, the governor of Britain was Julius



Agricola, a very different person from Suetonius, of whom we heard so much in the last chapter. He was a great commander, and a wise man ; he showed his skill as a soldier, in conquering the Britons ; and he showed his wisdom as a ruler, in governing them well when they were conquered. He did not treat his vanquished enemies with harshness and cruelty, as Suetonius had done ; but he tried in every way to improve and to civilize them. He taught them many useful arts and sciences, and encouraged them to learn, and to read, and to study,—things to which they had hitherto been quite unaccustomed ; and when the Britons found that all this knowledge made them happier and more comfortable than they had been before, they were less disposed to resist the authority of their Roman conquerors, and no longer attempted to rebel.

Now, I think we may learn something from this conduct of Julius Agricola. It shows us the right and the wise way of using power, and of gaining a proper influence over others. Men do not like to be *forced* to obey those under whom they are placed. They would far rather obey because they see it is really for their own good to do so, or because they love and respect those who command them, than because they are compelled by fear of punishment. You can understand this from your

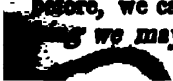


own feelings. You know how much more ready your obedience is to your parents or teachers, when it springs from love and respect, and the consciousness that this obedience is for your own good. Submission is then a pleasure, as well as a duty;—a duty you know it would be under any circumstances, because God himself commands us to render obedience to those to whom it is due, irrespective of their conduct to us. Now this feeling of which I have been speaking is common to us all; and therefore those who are set over others, show wisdom, as well as kindness, when they act in accordance with it, as Julius Agricola did. But let us return to our story.

Though the Britons were so much improved in many things by the Romans, yet there was one most important matter in which their conquerors could not benefit them, and that was religion. The Romans, with all their knowledge and civilization, were heathens like those they conquered; and though their religion might be less cruel and barbarous, yet it was quite as unlike true Christianity as that which the Druids taught. But God, who, in his providence, had permitted this little isle of ours to fall into the power of the great nation of Rome, had planned this in mercy to the poor, wild, ignorant inhabitants. The time *was approaching* when the gospel was to be

brought into Britain, and the Romans themselves were actually the instruments of introducing it.

It is not certainly known when and by whom Christianity was first published in this country; but there is some reason to believe, that St. Paul himself might have been the earliest missionary sent to our shores. We know from his own writings, that he preached the gospel in the uttermost parts of the earth,—that is of the Roman empire; and in his time Britain was, of all the conquered provinces, the most distant from Rome. And we read also in St. Paul's second Epistle to Timothy, of two persons named Pudens and Claudia, who sent greetings to Timothy through the apostle. Now it is known that there was a Roman named Pudens living at that time, whose wife was a British lady called Claudia; and therefore, it is very probable that they were the same two persons as those mentioned by St. Paul. It has been thought also, that some of the family of Caractacus, the celebrated British king who was taken captive to Rome, were converted to Christianity while they were there, and that, when they returned to their native country, they took back with them the knowledge of the gospel. Of all this, as I said before, we cannot be quite sure; but of one thing we may be sure, and that is, that in



less than a hundred years after the birth of Christ, the gospel was made known in this land, and that many of our forefathers had learnt to turn from their idols, and to serve the living God.

Now how wonderful all this is. It is just an instance of what we may see every day about and around us—that God can, and that He often does, bring good out of what appears to us to be only evil. When we were thinking of the dreadful slaughter which took place in this island during the struggle between the Britons and the Romans, all seemed evil,—all sad; and even when the country was subdued, and brought into a state of civilization under Julius Agricola, still there was much to mourn over, much that was evil, for there was only heathenism among the Britons even then. But look a little further off; see what has been going on all this time in Rome, in the greatest city of the world, from whence the conquerors of our isle were sent. There we see a Christian church established—it is not quite certain by whom,—and we see St. Paul preaching to the Romans around him, and giving them instruction in the faith of Christ. And then, as these Roman converts increase in number, they make known the gospel to others, even to the very captives who *have been taken prisoners by the Roman*

forces, and brought from a little distant isle to this far-famed city! And they afterwards, in their turn, go back, and declare these same truths in their native land; and perhaps the faithful apostle Paul himself journeyed with them there, to be their teacher and their missionary. Now see what a number of circumstances, and what a long chain of events, are all linked together here, and the end of them all is—what? The establishment of Christianity in our native land. Every link in that chain was necessary, in the providence of God, to bring this about. Every little event was ordained to happen just at the right time, and in the right place; and though sometimes it seemed as if the final result must be evil, and not good, yet we see how great, and how merciful that end was when it at last appeared. Does not this show the truth of our motto at the head of this chapter?

Now, perhaps, we may wish that all this good had been accomplished without any evil intermingled with it. No doubt this would have been far pleasanter, had it been possible. But we must remember, that *unmixed* good cannot exist in a fallen and sinful world. *That* is reserved for a higher and better state, where there will be no sin, and therefore no sorrow, to mar our joys. And then, we should consider too, that God is a sovereign who gives no

account of His matters and of His doings, but who, we may be fully assured, will do all rightly and wisely. And therefore, when we cannot understand, we should patiently submit to His will, and to His providence, knowing that it is our ignorance only which makes events look so darkly to us now, and that we shall find, in a brighter world, if not here, that He hath done all things well.

One part, one little part, we dimly scan  
 Through the dark medium of life's feverish dream :  
 Yet dare arraign the whole stupendous plan,  
 If but that little part incongruous seem.  
 Nor is that part, perhaps, what mortals deem ;  
 Oft from apparent ill our blessings rise.  
 O then renounce that impious self-esteem,  
 That aims to trace the secrets of the skies ;  
 For thou art but of dust ; be humble, and be wise.

BEATTIE.

And now I must tell you something of another British king who lived about this time, for we cannot be quite certain as to dates at so early a period of our history. His name was Lucius, and he reigned over a district in the southern part of Britain, though under the authority of the Romans ; for Britain was at this time a province of the Roman empire. Lucius had, like others of his countrymen, heard the gospel, and he was anxious not only to know but to practise the truths he had learnt, *and to rule his subjects according to the word*

of God. But Lucius felt that he needed further instruction, and, like a wise man, he sought it from those who were able and willing to teach him. At that time, Rome was the chief place in the world, not only for every thing connected with art, and science, and civilization, but also for the knowledge of true religion. It was far different afterwards. As we go on in our history, we shall see that Rome, in a few centuries from the time we are now speaking of, became the head and centre not of truth but of error, and that the instructions she then sent out were not the pure doctrines of the gospel of Christ, but the corrupt traditions of men. But of all this we shall speak more another time.

Lucius, in his desire for instruction, wrote a letter to the bishop of Rome, whose name was Eleutherius, and in that letter he asked for advice, and particularly requested to be told how he should govern the kingdom and the people over whom he was placed. Now the answer of Eleutherius was so wise and so beautiful, that I must tell you at least a part of it, just as it was translated from the Latin language, in which it was at first written. "Ye have received of late," said the good bishop, "through God's mercy, in the kingdom of Britain, the law and faith of Christ: ye have *with you, within the realm, both parts of the*

scriptures ; out of them, by God's grace, with the council of the realm, take ye a law, and by that law rule your kingdom of Britain ; for you be God's vicar in your kingdom. The people of the realm of Britain be your's, whom ye ought to gather in concord and peace, to call them to the faith and law of Christ, to cherish and maintain them, to rule and govern them, so as you may reign everlastingly with Him whose vicar you are."

It is said that a present accompanied this letter, and that present was a Bible. Eleutherius also sent two good men to instruct Lucius still further in the Christian faith, into which he was soon after baptized ; and there is every reason to believe that he became indeed a Christian king, and a true convert to the religion he professed. He was a useful king too. He built many new churches ; and some of the heathen temples which had before been used for the worship of idols, were now changed into places for the service of the true God. Lucius died about the year 200 ; and, it is said, he was buried in the city of Gloucester. The loss of such a wise and good king must have been very much felt in Britain ; but others were raised up to carry on the work he began so well, and a little number of faithful Christians was, from that time, always to be found in



the country, though there was much ignorance and heathenism left there still.

And now may we not say that brighter days had indeed dawned upon Britain? The light of the gospel had appeared, and the darkness of idolatry was gradually vanishing from before it. Many long years indeed passed away before that light shone into all the dark corners of the island; and many errors sprang up from time to time, like mists, to obscure the brightness of the truth. All this we shall see as we go on in the history; but we will end this chapter with feelings of gratitude to Him, who, as I said before, ordered all things so wisely and mercifully for our native land, that though she was brought into subjection to man, that very subjection led to her gaining a better and truer liberty than she ever enjoyed before,—for she learnt to “know the truth,” and “the truth made her free indeed.”

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## VI. THE FIRST MARTYR IN BRITAIN.

A.D. 303—312.

Again—I see again  
The great victorious train,  
The Martyr Army from their toils reposing :  
The blood-red robes they wear  
Empurpling all the air,  
Ev'n their immortal limbs, the signs of wounds disclosing.  
O holy Stephen, thou  
Art there, and now thy brow  
Hast still the placid smile it wore in dying,  
When, under the heap'd stones in anguish lying,  
Thy clasping hands were fondly spread to heaven,  
And thy last accents pray'd thy foes might be forgiven !  
MILMAN.

You have often watched the sky on a changing April day. You have loved to look at the bright sun-beams, and the clear blue heaven, and to feel the soft spring air blowing upon you, when all around seemed fair and beautiful. But then suddenly, a cloud, a black cloud, appeared, and the sun was hid, and the sky darkened in a moment, and the large rain-drops began to fall,—and all was changed. *But in a few minutes you looked again. The*

rain was almost gone, the sun was shining once more, the dark cloud was quickly passing away, and on it glowed the beautiful bow,—the emblem of mercy,—to cheer you with the hope of a brighter day. Now this is a picture of life, and not only of the life of individual men, but of whole nations. Change is written upon every thing in the history of this world. When we look back, as we are now doing, upon past ages, we see a series of events continually varying. Not all bright, nor all cloudy; but sometimes joyous, and sometimes sad; trouble and sorrow one day, and hope and comfort the next.

Our last chapter told us of brighter days in Britain;—the lines you have just read will show you, that our subject to-day is of a different and very mournful kind;—it is to be a story of martyrdom,—the short history of one who was the first who died in this country for the sake of the truth he professed, and of the God, the true God, in whom he had learnt to believe.

And now look in the map of England. In the county of Hertford, you will find a town named St. Alban's; its former name was Verulam. In that town stands an ancient abbey, which was built in memory of the very man whose story I am going to tell you.

*Although there were many Christians in*

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Rome at the time of which we are speaking, yet the emperors had hitherto all been heathens, and some of them had cruelly persecuted their Christian subjects. Many faithful converts had, at different times and in different places, been put to death for the truth's sake, and were gone to join the glorious army of martyrs in the world above; and now, for the first time, in the reign of Diocletian, the persecution extended to Britain.

In a place called Caer-Leon, in the western part of the country, where Monmouthshire is now, there lived a Christian preacher, named Amphibalus. When the persecution reached that spot, he left his home, and fled; not from cowardice, (there was no such feeling as that in this good man,) but from a right and proper regard to his own safety. You remember it was Christ's command to his disciples,—“When they persecute you in one city, flee to another.” This was what Amphibalus did; he went to the eastern part of Britain, and took refuge in the house of Alban, who, as I told you, lived in the town which now bears his name, but which was then called Verulam. I cannot say whether Alban had known Amphibalus in former days, or whether they were strangers to each other; nor do I know his real motive in receiving him at such a time as this. *Alban was not yet a Christian, but he shewed much*

generosity and disinterested kindness, in so readily opening his doors, and endangering his own life for the protection of a fellow-creature. Now we are told in the Bible, that those who exercise charity to the people of God, shall in no wise lose their reward; and the truth of this was remarkably proved in the case of Alban. He gained indeed no earthly reward, far from it; but he gained what was of much more value,—eternal life and a martyr's crown.

You may suppose that a Christian teacher like Amphibalus, would not lose the opportunity of instructing his kind protector in those truths for which he was himself ready, if necessary, to lay down his life. And we may imagine how earnestly he talked to Alban, and how affectionately he urged upon him the importance of believing the gospel, and becoming a Christian. And then, if his friend hesitated through fear of the consequences, and trembled at the thought of persecution, and suffering, and perhaps death itself, for the truth's sake, we may believe that Amphibalus pressed upon him those words of Christ,—“If any man is ashamed of me, and of my gospel, of him shall the Son of Man be ashamed.” But there was little time either for Amphibalus to teach, or for Alban to listen; for the persecutors were on their road, and soon they might *come and tear the faithful minister away to*

prison or to execution. But Amphibalus did not preach in vain. Alban heard, and was convinced ; for God himself, not man only, was his teacher ; and he declared his determination to become a Christian. Now, it is an easy thing in this country, in the happy days in which we live, for a person to profess to be a Christian. It is very easy to join with the people of God in reading the Scripture, and in prayer and praise ; for there is now no heathen emperor, no cruel law to persecute, or to put to death, those who believe the gospel. And just because it is so easy, we may fear that there are many who *only* profess, without having any real love of the truth in their hearts. It was very different in Alban's days. To profess Christianity at such a time as that, was to endanger life itself ; it was to say what St. Paul once said, "I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die for the Lord Jesus." But Alban did not hesitate ; he was willing to declare himself a Christian, and to take the consequences, whatever they might be.

When it was no longer possible to conceal Amphibalus, his kind friend persuaded him to dress in other clothes, and to escape in disguise from the men who were seeking his life. Amphibalus did so, and soon after the pagan officers entered Alban's house. And now *the time was come for Alban to prove that he was*

not afraid nor ashamed to profess the gospel of Christ. He boldly came forward, and offered himself in the place of the Christian teacher whom these men were seeking. His cruel persecutors led him to a heathen sacrifice which was just then going forward, and required him to join in the idolatrous worship. Alban refused, and though they tortured him to make him yield, yet he remained firm still. Then his enemies, seeing their efforts would be quite useless, sentenced him to death, and he was taken away to be beheaded. But Alban did not die alone. The executioner who was commanded to slay him, was so struck with his firmness, and courage, and patient endurance of suffering, that he declared his readiness to die for him or with him, rather than take his life. Another executioner was found, and the new convert, for such he seems to have been, after seeing Alban die, suffered death himself also.

Thus died Alban, the first British martyr. It is indeed an honour to his name to have such a title, and to be remembered, from age to age, as the noble Christian hero who left so bright an example of firm faith and holy courage. Amphibalus, from whom he had received those truths which had taught him to feel and to act as he did, did not long survive *his faithful convert*. His enemies soon dis-

covered him, and put him also to a cruel death; and thus the teacher and the disciple both won the martyr's crown, and were reunited in a happier world, there for ever to rejoice that they had been counted worthy to suffer for Christ's sake; and to praise Him who had enabled them, weak as they were in themselves, to be "faithful unto death," that they might receive "the crown of life."

The storm of persecution soon passed away. Diocletian died; and not many years after, a Christian ruler was at the head of the Roman empire. This emperor was Constantine, and it is interesting to us, as British Christians, to know, that the first Roman emperor who made a profession of Christianity, was born in our own land. York is said to have been his birth-place. The conversion of Constantine from Paganism took place in a very remarkable manner; but as we are talking now of events in British and not in Roman history, we must pass over the life of Constantine, and go on, in our next chapter, to what happened in this country after the death of Alban, and of the other early martyrs.

And now I want to make one remark before we end our lesson. We have been tracing the progress of Christianity in Britain from its commencement under the first preachers of *the gospel*; we have seen how soon trouble



and persecution threatened to destroy the little band of Christians, and how some of them actually fell under the sword of their pagan persecutors. Now this is not peculiar to England; it has been, and still is, the case in every place where the gospel is preached. That gospel is contrary to the corrupt feelings and wishes of men; and therefore they try to stop its progress by every means in their power, and they are stirred up in their wicked endeavours by the great Enemy of truth himself. But it is quite impossible that they should succeed; for it is God's declared will that His gospel should spread through all the earth, and we know that nothing can prevent the accomplishment of His purposes. And so it has always happened, that persecution, instead of checking, has helped forward the progress of the truth, and that the example of the calm courage of these faithful martyrs, and their readiness to meet death rather than renounce their principles, have done more for the cause of Christianity than much previous instruction had done, and made more converts to real religion. We have already seen an instance of this in the case of the executioner, who was converted by Alban's noble example; and many similar instances might be found to *prove the truth* of what I have just said. And *therefore, if we feel discouraged when we read*

of the persecution and martyrdom of God's faithful servants, let us remember, that these are only illustrations of what we were talking about not long ago,—that God often brings good out of evil ; for it is an old saying, and a true one, as you will find continually proved by history,—that “the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church,”

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## VII. DANGERS FROM WITHIN.

A.D. 400—430.

——— To support  
The last remains of empire, was recall'd  
The weary Roman, and the Briton lay  
Unnerved, exhausted, spiritless, and sunk.  
Then, sad relief! from the bleak coast that hears  
The German ocean roar, deep-blooming, strong,  
And yellow-hair'd, the blue-eye'd Saxon came.  
He came implor'd, but came with other aim  
Than to protect. For conquest and defence  
Suffices the same arm.—THOMSON.

I TOLD you that Rome was the greatest nation in the world, in the times of which we have been speaking;—the greatest in extent, the greatest in wealth, the greatest in power. But Rome's grandeur, like that of other nations, was not to last for ever. Babylon, Persia, Macedon, Carthage, and many more countries celebrated in history, had already passed away; and the time was coming for Rome's decline and fall also. Enemies from various quarters attacked those very people who had so long *been* the terror of the world; and now the *Romans*, instead of making new conquests,

—

were obliged to defend themselves ; and instead of sending out soldiers to protect the countries they had formerly subdued, they were forced to recal their armies to assist in driving out the enemy at home. And so, in about 500 years from the landing of Julius Cæsar, Britain was abandoned by the Romans, and left once more, not indeed to remain free and independent, but soon to fall into the hands of other conquerors. Before, however, all this happened, some interesting events took place which we must not pass over, especially as they will introduce to us these new conquerors of our isle,—“the blue-eyed Saxons,” referred to in the lines you have just read.

In the last chapter, when we were talking about the martyrdom of the early Christians, you remember that I told you, that the progress of the gospel had been rather helped forward than kept back by persecution. But there is another evil, greater than persecution, which often sadly interferes with the cause of truth ; and that is an evil from within, not from without. Have you not heard it remarked sometimes, “A false friend is more dangerous than an open enemy ?” Now there is much truth in this saying. A false friend is more dangerous than an open enemy, because he is less suspected, and therefore less *prepared for*. An open enemy is known, and

treated as such, and we can protect ourselves from his attacks ; but a false friend, as long as he is not known to be false, is considered as on our side, and so we give him our affections, and our attention, and our confidence ; and, if he betrays that confidence, when we are off our guard, what mischief, what evil he may bring upon us !

But you will wonder what all this has to do with the history of Britain, and what false friend, what unsuspected enemy, was creeping into the country, or into the church, at this time. The evil that I mean was one connected with religion. Errors, and fearful ones too, had sprung up in the early British church ; and these errors had first been taught by a man who was himself, professedly, a Christian ; he was a native of this country, and his name was Pelagius. I am not going to tell you of all the false doctrines which Pelagius taught. It is not necessary that I should do so, nor would it be interesting to you. But I will just mention that his principal error was this ; —that human nature is not in itself corrupt, that is, that the heart is not what scripture declares it to be, “deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.” Now you will wonder how any person professing to believe the Bible, could possibly teach for truth what is so *contrary to the word of God*. But those who, in

the pride of their heart, trust to their own reason, instead of humbly seeking the teaching of God, will err, even with the light of truth all around them : and so it was with Pelagius. Had the error rested with him alone, it would have been sad, sad for himself to be led astray into what was so wrong and so dangerous ;—but the evil extended further ; for many were led, through Pelagius, to embrace the same errors, and to fall into the same sins.

Now there is a useful lesson which we should learn from all this, a lesson on the right and wrong use of influence. You know what is meant by influence. It is that power which one person has over the mind and feelings of another, in drawing them to himself, and guiding them according to his own will and opinions.

This influence is acquired by various means, —by rank, or wealth, or talent, or knowledge, or character : every person has some degree of influence, and he uses it either for a right purpose or for a wrong one. Even a child has influence. The example, the conduct, the words of any child in a family must have some effect on those about him ; and so he has some influence. Younger brothers and sisters are influenced by the example and *behaviour of the elder ; little school-fellows and*

play-fellows influence one another in their daily lessons and amusements ; each is an example either of idleness or diligence, waywardness or obedience, unkindness or gentleness ; and so each exercises influence over the other accordingly, either for good or for evil. And then, as children grow up, their influence becomes more extensive ; their power of leading others either in a right or in a wrong way is greater ; and if they fill a high station in life, if they are distinguished on any account above those around them, then their influence becomes very strong indeed, and they are either great blessings in the world, or very dangerous members of society, according as that influence is directed. You may find examples yourselves of persons who exercised this power over others either well or ill. Julius Agricola, King Lucius, Amphibalus,—what good they effected by their influence rightly directed ! And on the other hand, what mischief was done by the ancient Druids, and by the heathen emperors, and by Pelagius himself, through *their* influence wrongly directed !

You see then what an important matter this influence of ours is, and how careful we should be to use whatever degree we may have of it, to a good purpose. But it is time for us to go back to our story.

*As the errors of Pelagius extended among*

the people, the faithful bishops and ministers of the church in Britain became alarmed, and feeling unable themselves alone to contend with the evil, they wisely sought assistance elsewhere. They sent to the neighbouring country of France; and two Christian bishops willingly came over to help them with their experience and their counsel. Their names were Germanus and Lupus. And the efforts of these good men were of much use. They preached openly in the fields and high-ways, and multitudes came to listen to them. Many were convinced of the errors they had received, and returned to the simple truths of scripture; and the false teachers began to feel that they would soon lose the disciples they had made. So it was determined that the matter should be tried in a public discussion, in which both parties might talk over their different opinions, and defend them as they best could. The place in which they met is said to have been St. Alban's, where, you remember, the first British martyr had, not many years before, laid down his life for the sake of the truth.

Multitudes flocked to listen to what might be said at this conference. Men, women, and children were there, all eager to hear the result. On one side, were Pelagius with his followers, and on the other, the good bishops,



and the Christian ministers who still remained faithful to the truth. The party of Pelagius spoke first; and then Germanus and Lupus answered them, very calmly and gently, but yet firmly; and all they said they proved by Scripture, so that their adversaries could make no reply. The errors were exposed, the false teachers were silenced, and the people shouted for joy at the success of the good bishops and the cause of truth. So ended this conference; and it is an event to be remembered, and thankfully too, in British history, as one of the many instances in which God has delivered our beloved country from error, and blessed the efforts made to establish His truth.

Germanus and Lupus remained some time longer preaching the gospel in Britain, particularly in that part which is now called Wales; and the refutation of Pelagianism, as it was termed, was not the only assistance which these good men rendered to our country. It happened, just about this time, that some enemies of a different kind made their appearance in Britain. These were the Saxons, who, as you read, came


From the bleak coast that hears  
The German ocean roar.

And besides them came the Picts, a nation who *inhabited* the northern part of the British Isle, *and gave trouble* very frequently, at this time

and afterwards, to those who lived in the south. The Britons hastened to oppose them; and Germanus and Lupus were asked to assist in driving these enemies away. You may think this was a singular request to make to Christian bishops; and indeed Germanus and Lupus had been very differently employed, and in a manner much more suited to their office, and character, and inclination; they had just received into the Christian church, by the sacred ordinance of baptism, a number of new converts, who, we may hope, were more than mere professors,—real believers in the gospel, ready to show their sincerity by the holiness and consistency of their future lives.

When the tidings of war came, Germanus and Lupus felt that they had a new duty to perform,—that of self-defence; and they immediately joined the British soldiers in their attempts to drive away the enemy. But they went to the battle in a spirit, not of self-confidence, but of simple trust in Him, who alone could give success in this contest, as He had done before in one of a different kind. They went very much in the spirit of young David; who, when he came forth to meet the Philistine giant Goliath, said, “Thou comest to me with a spear, and with a shield, and with a sword, but I come to thee in the name of the *Lord of Hosts.*”

The battle took place among the rocks and valleys of North Wales. Germanus and Lupus placed their soldiers in ambush,—that is, they directed them to conceal themselves from the enemy, and to hide in the most secret places, and to be ready, at the proper moment, to come forward, and make an attack. And these bishops gave a very singular command to their men ; they told them, at the appointed signal, to start up from the places in which they were to conceal themselves, and to raise their voices altogether in a song,—not in a fierce war-song such as was customary among heathen nations, and such as the Druids might perhaps have taught the British soldiers of former days ;—but in a Christian song,—they were to shout, “ Hallelujah, Hallelujah, Hallelujah ! ” The soldiers did just as they were directed ; and at the appointed signal, the sacred song was heard, and the rocks and valleys of that wild district echoed back the sound, “ Hallelujah ! ” And what was the effect ? The shout, re-echoing as it did from every side, appeared to come from a very large multitude,—from a much greater number of soldiers than Germanus and Lupus had assembled,—and it struck such terror into the minds of the enemy, that without attempting a battle with an army which *they imagined* to be so great, they turned, and *fled, and left* Germanus and Lupus, and their



followers, to enjoy a victory gained as perhaps no victory was ever gained before, excepting that of king Jehoshaphat over the people of Ammon, and Edom, and Moab.

The story of that battle is so similar to what I have just been telling you, that I would recommend you to read the account, and to compare it with that of the victory of Germanus and Lupus. You will find it in 2 Chron. xx.

Germanus and Lupus left Britain soon after this, but Germanus returned once more to contend again with the Pelagians who had revived during his absence. His efforts were blessed a second time, and those fearful errors were but little heard of in the British church afterwards. In our next chapter, I shall have to tell you more of the foreign enemies, who were not easily displaced. And now, before we conclude, as we always try to find a lesson for ourselves in what we read, let us think what is to be learnt from this story of the Christian bishops, and their work in Britain.

We might indeed learn many things from their history, but I will mention only one,—the importance of rightly understanding scripture truth. You have seen what it was, that, with God's blessing, led to the overthrow of Pelagianism in this island :—it was bringing error to the test of Scripture ; showing the falseness of *the doctrines held by Pelagius, by comparing*

them with the plain declarations of God's word. This is the best way of confuting all errors connected with religion. But then, in order to be able to do this, the Bible must be rightly understood by us ; and in order rightly to understand the Bible, we must read it with a simple desire to learn the revealed will of God, with a humble mind, and prayer for the teaching of the Holy Spirit who alone can enable us really to comprehend it. If Scripture is studied in a proud spirit, or with a determination beforehand to find in it only what suits our own corrupt wills, then, as I said before, we may read it not only without benefit, but actually to our own hurt and danger. The Bible is the only safe-guard from error, and error, we must remember, springs up at all times, though it does not always wear the same appearance. There are errors of doctrine and of practice too, and the word of God is the only remedy for both. Let us diligently study this precious book, and then, whatever dangers arise, we shall know where to find safety, and how to obtain comfort ; and be preserved from what would otherwise lead us far astray from God, and happiness, and heaven.

## VIII. DANGERS FROM WITHOUT.

A.D. 449—580.

Two brothers were their capitayns, which hight,  
Hengist and Horsus, well approv'd in war ;  
And both of them men of renowned might ;  
Who making vantage of their civil jar,  
And of those foreigners which came from far,  
Grew great, and got large portions of the land,  
That in the realm ere long they stronger are  
Than they which sought at first their helping hand,  
And Vortigern enforst the kingdom to aband.


SPENSER.

I HAVE not yet explained to you the lines which headed our last chapter. We have seen indeed the Saxons making their first appearance in Britain ; but how was it that they came “implor'd,” and yet “with other aim than to protect ?” We shall soon see how this happened.

Soon after the departure of Germanus, the Picts again commenced their attacks. These enemies, as I told you, lived in the northern part of the country, in what we now call Scotland. Some of the Roman emperors had built

a wall, and made boundaries and ramparts; in order to keep them from invading the south of the island. But all this was now of little use. The Picts and Scots broke through the boundary line, and began their ravages again. And what were the Britons to do? They needed help; and in their distress, they applied to the Romans, under whose rule or protection they had been so many years. The Roman soldiers, however, had withdrawn, as I told you before, to protect their own country; and when the Britons now sent to Rome for an army to defend them, no answer was returned, and no assistance came. The Romans were too much occupied with their own troubles to attend to those of others.

The British king at this time was Vortigern. He was a bad and wicked man; one who had not heeded the example of Germanus and Lupus, either in peace or war; and one who therefore could not expect to have the good success and blessing which they had experienced. In his present difficulty, Vortigern applied for assistance to the Saxons,—to those very men a few of whom had already appeared in Britain, as enemies rather than as friends. But these Saxons were brave and warlike; fighting and conquest were always pleasant to them; so they accepted the invitation of Vortigern, and sent over an army of soldiers



headed by two brothers, named Hengist and Horsa.

The Saxons were successful in their encounter with the Picts and Scots, and drove them away ; but then, when Vortigern and the Britons expected that these warlike assistants of theirs, having done what was required, would take their leave, and quietly return to their "bleak coast," it was discovered that the Saxons had no intention whatever of going away from Britain. No ;—their object all along had been to conquer for themselves ; they "came with other aim than to protect." The Britons of course made some resistance ; and so, from being friends, they and the Saxons soon became foes ; and many a fierce battle was fought between them now, and in after years. But, as in the contest with the Romans, the Britons were overpowered. The Saxons continually gained strength and territory ; and in the end, (for this contest continued during many years,) they acquired possession of nearly the whole of Britain ; drove the natives into distant corners of the land, particularly into Wales and Cornwall, and then divided the country among themselves. I should tell you, that some of these unfortunate Britons fled into France, and then settled in a part of that country which, from them, still bears the name of Brittany.

The Saxons divided Britain into seven king-



doms, and appointed a separate sovereign over each ; these kingdoms were not, however, all formed at the same time. I will tell you their names ; and you can then easily find them in a map of ancient Britain ; and by comparing that with a modern one, you will discover which of our present counties belonged to one kingdom, and which to another. These seven kingdoms are called the Saxon Heptarchy. Their names were, Kent, Northumbria, Mercia, East Anglia, South Saxony, East Saxony, and West Saxony.

And now, as the greater part of the present inhabitants of England are descended from these same conquerors, it will be interesting to enquire what were the manners, and customs, and language, and, above all, the religion of our Saxon ancestors. I am afraid we shall not be able to say much in their favour in these early days ; though, in after times, when they had become more civilized, and especially when they had received the knowledge of Christianity, they showed themselves to be a fine and intelligent race of people. We have already seen how warlike they were ;—fighting was indeed the business and amusement of their lives, as it was of most of the barbarous nations of those times. We have seen too, that they acted selfishly and treacherously in their conduct to the

Britons, when they first came to assist them as friends, and then turned round, and joined with the enemy against them, and finally took possession of the country they had been called to defend. And then, as to their religion ;— ah ! the most grievous part of this story of the conquest of Britain by the Saxons is, that when they took possession of our country, they brought with them the idols and the false religion of their own, so that Britain once again became a land of heathen idolatry. And yet, true religion did not quite pass away from our country even then. The ancient inhabitants, driven as they were into the distant corners of the island, still retained their knowledge of Christianity ; and though they were few in number, and little was known about them for some years, yet the time arrived when, as we shall soon see, they came forward to declare their faithful adherence to the truths they had been taught, and which they still remembered and valued.

The religion of the Saxons was, in many respects, different from that of Rome, and that of ancient Britain. Their chief gods were the Sun, the Moon, Tuisco, Woden, Thor, Friga, and Saturn. Perhaps you will be surprised when I tell you, that we still retain the names of these Saxon deities in the seven days of the week, only there is a little difference

as to the spelling. Thus we have the Sun's or *Sun-day*, the Moon's or *Mon-day*, Tuisco's or *Tues-day*, Woden's or *Wednes-day*, Thor's or *Thurs-day*, Friga's or *Fri-day*, Saturn's or *Satur-day*.

And now, before I go on with this account of the Saxons, let us pause, and think for a moment how thankful we should be for the change which a few centuries have made in our beloved country. The very days of the week, as they pass on so quickly one after another, with all their joys and sorrows, may teach us a lesson of gratitude. When the bright sabbath sun shines upon us, and the chiming bells call us to the house of God, oh, how thankful we should be that we do not go there to worship that sun, glorious as it is, but to adore Him who made it, and all the shining host in the sky,—the moon and the stars also;—Him of whom it is indeed the beautiful emblem,—the Sun of righteousness. And so on all the other days of the week,—as each comes round, and brings us some employment, some work to do, useful either to ourselves or others, let us feel thankful, that on every one of them we are taught to worship, not some idol appointed for that particular day,—one of the “lords many, or gods many” of the heathen,—but the same true and only God who, day by day, keeps us in life, and health, and

safety ; who feeds us with food convenient for us, and gives us fruitful seasons; and fills our hearts with joy and gladness !

The Saxons are said to have offered in sacrifice the prisoners whom they took in war, though this custom was afterwards dropped ; they had also other cruel rites and ceremonies connected with their religion.

But there is another subject which we must not forget, while we are talking of the Saxons, because it is one of those things for which we who live in England in these days, are a good deal indebted to them,—I mean their language. The English, which we speak now, has indeed been formed from a great variety of foreign languages, particularly from the Latin, which the Romans brought with them; and from the French, which the Normans introduced at a later period. And then, besides these, we have a number of words which have been added from time to time, both from ancient and modern tongues, as our knowledge of foreign books, and our intercourse with foreign nations became more extensive. But the *foundation* of our present language is Saxon, and a great many of the objects with which we are most familiar bear very nearly the identical names now that they did ten or twelve hundred years ago. The spelling indeed is different, but the sound is the same, or nearly so. The

names, for instance, of most of the natural objects which we see around us, such as the sun, the moon, the stars; the names of near relations, such as father, mother, son, and daughter;—the names of domestic animals, such as ox, sheep, ass;—the names of our ordinary food, such as bread, flesh, wheat;—and the names of the instruments used in tilling the soil, such as plough, spade, sickle,—all these words are Saxon. And it is well to remark, that those persons who speak or write in the simplest language, usually express themselves more in Saxon words than in any others, and thus our translation of the Bible which, sublime as it is, is yet so simple in its style that even a child or an uneducated person can understand a great deal of it, contains a very large proportion of Saxon words. But I have now said enough about the religion and the language of our Saxon fore-fathers. In after times, when they had increased in knowledge and intelligence, they formed many good laws and institutions of which we shall have to talk another day, for they belong to a future part of our history.

But I wish, before we end this chapter, to say a little more on the subject of language,—not of the Saxon in particular, but of language and speech in general. There is something wonderful in the idea of one person being

able to make known his thoughts, and feelings, and desires, and wishes, to another, just by certain sounds and words. We might puzzle ourselves for a long time, and to little purpose too, to find out how it was that Adam first knew what names to give to the objects and animals around him, when his Maker brought them to him to see what he would call them. We know little or nothing as to the origin,—the first beginning, of language. And then, when after the confusion of Babel, various languages began to be spoken by the different nations of the earth, instead of the single one which had previously been common to all mankind, it is wonderful to think that each of those many languages should have been kept so distinct for ages from all the rest, with a separate vocabulary, and a separate form of expression; so that if the people of one nation would hold intercourse with those of another, they must first learn each other's tongue, or else converse only by signs, as if they had no power of speech at all! Now there is something in all this, I say, which may surprise us, and make us think; and lead us to ask that question, which is much oftener asked than answered, "*why* is it so? why was speech given to man at all? and why was it afterwards broken up into so many different forms?" &c.

may be useful *to try*, at least, to answer the questions.

Now speech is one of those gifts which distinguish us from the brute,—the animal creation; for of course the sounds and words which some creatures have been taught to utter are not to be considered as language; they are merely imitative sounds, used without meaning and without thought, and nothing more—I need hardly remind you, that all the gifts we possess, were bestowed in order that they might be used,—used for our own good, for the good of others, and for the glory of Him who gave them. And therefore speech is to be employed for these purposes; it is the chief means by which it is ordained that we should communicate one with another; and when the words we speak are good in themselves, necessary, or useful, then we rightly and properly employ our power of language. And we might find many instances of language being so used as to produce a very great effect upon the hearers. One man has often, by the force of speech and language, so wrought upon the feeling of a whole multitude, as to lead them over to his own opinion, and make them think and act just in accordance with his own will. The ancient orators of Greece and Rome did this; and modern orators often use the same power now; so that you see how much

## DANGERS FROM WITHOUT.

influence, either for good or evil, as we were saying the other day, is acquired by a skillful employment of language, and how important it must be first to gain that influence, and then to use it aright.

But then, as speech, when understood, is such a powerful instrument for working upon men's minds, and as it may be used for so much good, why should there be this great diversity of languages to separate nations, and to prevent intercourse among them? Now in answer to this, I would remind you, that the confusion of tongues was originally a just judgment from God upon the wicked men of whom we read in Gen : xi ; and the punishment once sent was not afterwards removed. And yet, as we find continually that good is brought out of evil, so it may be with respect to this diversity of languages, which at first sight appears so inconvenient, and so troublesome. You must however bear in mind what I have so often told you before,—that all good here is mingled with evil, and that it is quite impossible that it should be otherwise in a world of sin.

Let us see then if there may not be some good in this diversity of languages. In the first place, it has been a check to idolatry. Just suppose that all nations spoke the same language, and so could converse with one another



without any trouble at all. How quickly would the wicked and foolish superstitions of one people have passed on to others, even to those who had perhaps the knowledge of christianity, and so have led them back into error and idolatry. Diversity of language was a sort of barrier to keep these enemies away, like the barrier, which, you remember, was erected in the north of Britain to keep off the incursions of enemies of a different kind. And then again, diversity of language may have prevented one nation from acquiring undue power over another. When the Romans conquered so large a portion of the world, they tried to establish their language in various countries, in order that they might obtain greater influence over them. But they did not succeed in doing this ; they could not destroy other languages, though, as in the case of our own, they in a great measure changed and improved them. And another, and the last good result I will mention from this diversity of languages is, that it encourages study, and so tends very much to intellectual improvement. The mind is greatly benefited by study of all kinds, and particularly by the exercise of comparing one language with another, and discovering in what respects they agree, and in what respects they differ. And *then*, those who know many languages are enabled to read a greater variety of books, and con-

verse with a greater number of persons, than those who know only their mother-tongue ;— this is another great advantage in gaining knowledge. But I have said much more than I at first intended, upon this subject of language, and so now I will only ask you to remember what I told you in the beginning, —the right use of speech, and the duty of employing it in a proper way,—in words of truth and wisdom ; recollecting that for every idle, as well as for every wicked word we utter, we shall hereafter be called to render an account.

Sacred interpreter of human thought,  
How few respect or use thee as they ought ;  
Yet all shall give account of ev'ry wrong,  
Who dare dishonour or misuse the tongue.

COWPER.

## IX. A SCENE IN ROME, AND ITS CONSEQUENCES.

A.D. 585—610.

Oh, how unlike the complex works of man,  
Heaven's easy, artless, unencumber'd plan !  
From ostentation as from weakness free,  
It stands like the cerulean arch we see,  
Majestic in its own simplicity.  
Inscribed above the portal, from afar  
Conspicuous as the brightness of a star ;  
Legible only by the light they give,  
Stand the soul-quickenings words—Believe and live.  
COWPER.

LET us suppose about a hundred years to have passed away since the settlement of the Saxons in Britain. The ancient inhabitants in the western part of the country still retain their language, and their customs, and their religion. The Saxons, having taken possession of nearly all the rest of the land, and divided it into the seven kingdoms of which I told you, are enjoying all that once belonged to the Britons, and they have again filled the country with superstition and idolatry. But you must not *imagine that the Britons have tamely submitted to this usurpation, and that they have made*

no further effort to regain their lost territory. Battles have been fought continually between the two parties during this long period, and one native prince especially has much distinguished himself by his valour and prowess in fighting against the Saxons. This prince was named Arthur. It is said, that he fought thirty battles, and performed a great many deeds of strength and bravery; but as his history is a good deal mixed up with fable, we need not say much respecting him. We are told that he had under his command knights and soldiers as brave as himself, and that after their battles and their victories, when they gained them, they used to assemble and feast together at one table, and that table was a *round* one, in order that all might sit without any distinction as to places,—none was to be more or less honoured than his neighbours, but each was to have an equal share of respect and esteem. As far as we know, Arthur seems to have been a generous, as well as a brave man.

And now let us change the scene of our story, and go a little further off. We will take a journey through part of Europe, but without stopping on our way, and fancy ourselves, in a few moments, standing in the great marketplace of Rome. What is going on there? *The streets are full of people; some are busy,*

and others are idle ; some are talking with their neighbours, buying, selling, chatting about the news of the day, others are listlessly gazing around them, and seem to have no business to transact without any one. But apart from the rest, we may see a company of merchants, and beside them a group of children,—little boys with fair hair, and soft blue eyes, looking as if they do not belong to any of the darker inhabitants of Italy. And they are not like children in general, gay and merry and happy; they seem sad and sorrowful;—who are they, and what are they doing here?—Ah ! it is no wonder if those children are sad; they have been taken away from their parents and their homes, and there they stand, captives and slaves in this strange city. The merchants have brought them here for sale.

But look again. Amongst the many persons going to and fro along those streets, there is one whose countenance is so mild and gentle we may feel sure that he is a benevolent,—a kind-hearted man ; one who loves to do good, and to help and comfort those who are in distress. Perhaps he will pity those poor children. As he passes by, he sees the captive boys, he gazes on them a moment, and then he turns to the merchants, and asks, “ Whence ~~come~~ these captives ? ” “ From the isle of ~~Malta~~ *Malta* ; ” is the answer. “ Are those island-

ers Christians?" continues the kind questioner. "O no, they are Pagans." "It is sad," the benevolent looking man goes on to say, "that the author of darkness should possess men with so bright faces. But what is the name of their particular nation?" "They are called Angli." "And well they may, for their *angel*-like faces; it becometh such to be co-heirs with the angels of heaven. In what province did they live?" "In Deira," is the reply. "They are to be freed *de Dei ira*,"—that is, from the anger of God, answers the other. "And how call ye the king of that country?" "Ella." "Surely then *Hallelujah* ought to be sung in his kingdom, to the praise of that God who created all things."

Here the conversation ends; but not the *effects* of the conversation. You have already discovered who the captive boys are; they are Saxons from our own country; Anglo-Saxons they are called from the name of a part of the land from whence they originally came. But you are anxious to know something more about this kind man, who is so much interested in the young slaves. Who is he, and what is his name? He is the well-known Gregory; a person of honour and dignity in the church of Rome, who, not long after his conversation which I have just related, becomes the bishop of Rome. And now for the results which follow.

Gregory was not like many kind, warm-hearted people, who, when they see distress, pity, and wish, and intend to relieve it, and then go away, and forget altogether the case which interested them so much. He saw and pitied the poor captives; he determined to do something for the benefit of the country from whence they came; he thought, he planned, and as soon as he had the power, he carried all these thoughts and plans into execution. And here is an excellent hint and lesson for us,—an example of active benevolence. We should always remember, that mere *feeling*, however kind and right in itself, can be of no use unless it leads to *action*. We must *do* as well as *feel*, *relieve* as well as *pity*, otherwise our poor distressed fellow-creatures will not be benefited by us, however much we may wish and intend to do them good.

But what was Gregory's plan? As soon as he became Bishop of Rome, he determined to send missionaries to Britain, to instruct the Saxons there in the christian religion, and to bring them from idolatry to the worship of the true God. Gregory appointed a minister of the church of Rome, named Augustine, as the chief person in the expedition; and with him he sent about forty others to assist him *in the work*. He gave them good instructions, ~~and told them,~~ that though he himself was

unable to go with them, because he had other duties at home, yet he should accompany them day by day with his prayers to God for their protection during their journey, and for their good success when they arrived. So Augustine and his companions departed. But before they reached Britain, they began to feel much disheartened. They found the way long and troublesome ; then they thought of all the dangers they might meet with, not only on their journey, but afterwards, in the midst of a heathen nation ; so they actually sent back Augustine to beg Gregory to excuse them from the mission altogether ! And does not this conduct of theirs teach us another lesson ? It is not enough even to determine, and to begin to act in any good work. We must be prepared to meet with difficulties and discouragements, and to persevere through them all, or our determinations, and our good beginnings will be of very little use indeed !

Happily Gregory was not like those fearful men ; he was not to be drawn from his purpose. Having once determined upon his work, he resolved to carry it through ; so he sent back Augustine with a letter full of kind encouragements and exhortations. The missionary band could now hesitate no longer ; they continued their journey, and in due time they reached the *British shore*, and landed on the coast of Kent.



Kent was, you remember, one of the seven kingdoms ; and the sovereign reigning there at this time was Ethelbert. Now it so happened, in the providence of God, that this part of the country was just then in a particularly favourable state for the introduction of christianity. Ethelbert had married a French princess named Bertha, who was herself a christian ; and he permitted her to have a bishop for her chaplain, and freely to exercise her religion in an ancient church, in the city of Canterbury, where she generally resided. When Augustine arrived, and made known to the king the object of his mission, Ethelbert received him very graciously. He gave him leave to preach, and he gave the people leave to hear, and to judge for themselves as to what Augustine taught ; only Ethelbert would not allow any undue persuasion to be used to force persons to change their religion against their will ; and in this of course he was right. So Augustine commenced preaching in the old church at Canterbury. Bertha went constantly to listen to him ; and so afterwards did Ethelbert himself ; and the result was, that, in a short time, not only did many of the people become converted to christianity, but the king also professed his belief, and was baptized.

All this was very encouraging to Augustine,

especially as at that time Ethelbert was the chief of the seven Saxon Kings, and had great influence over them; so that if he embraced christianity there was every hope that the others might follow his example. And you may suppose how delighted the good Gregory was to hear of the success of his mission to Britain. He wrote a letter to Augustine, full of joy and gratitude, but at the same time full of humility; and he exhorted him not to be proud and puffed up at the success of his labours, but to remember the words of Christ to his disciples, when they were triumphing because the very devils were subject to them, "Rather rejoice in this, that your names are written in Heaven."

But while we are talking of the labours of Augustine, we must not forget that the British church was still in existence,—a church far purer than that which the Romish missionaries were now endeavouring to establish among the Anglo-Saxons, and that these native christians had their ministers and their bishops also. When the work of Augustine increased upon him, he was desirous that the heads of this British church should join with him, and give him their assistance. He had just been made Archbishop of Canterbury, and in the exercise of his office, he invited all the bishops, *both British and Saxon*, to assemble together

in council, and their place of meeting was under an oak tree, which was afterwards called Augustine's Ake, or Oak. When they were all assembled, Augustine mentioned his wishes to the British bishops. He told them that he desired that they should join with him and his followers in their labours, and that they should, like them, acknowledge the Pope, the Bishop of Rome, as their head, and promise all due obedience to him as such. But the British ministers hesitated. They did not feel quite sure as to Augustine's motives in making these proposals; and they remembered too that they were subject, under God, to their own Bishop of Caer-leon, and therefore they did not see why they should be required to yield obedience to the distant Bishop of Rome. So they refused to make any promises to Augustine; and before the next appointed meeting they determined to consult upon this matter with a certain aged and experienced minister of their church, a wise and good man, to whom they were accustomed to refer for advice and guidance. They went therefore to him, they told him all about Augustine and his proposals, and then asked how they should act, and what answer they should return. The aged man soon gave them his answer. He said, if they had reason to believe Augustine to be really a man of God,

they should follow him ; but if otherwise, that they should not do so. The British ministers then enquired how they should find out whether Augustine were a man of God or no. Now this was a point which could hardly be decided with certainty. We can none of us see the hearts of our fellow-men, nor discover the secret motives of their actions. We can only judge according to those actions ; this cannot always very easily be done, and therefore we should never hastily form a judgement or opinion of any one. Still, the rule given by Christ himself is, " By their fruits ye shall know them ;" and it was according to this rule that the aged adviser of the British bishops desired them to act. He gave them a test by which they might ascertain whether Augustine was indeed a humble servant of the God whose religion he professed. The old man said, " Contrive it so that he may come first into the place of synod. If he rise up when you draw near unto him, hear him then obediently, knowing him for a servant of Christ ; but if he slighteth you, and vouchsafeth not to rise up unto you, seeing you are more in number, let him be slighted by you." By this he meant, not of course that they should treat Augustine with any disrespect, but that they should simply refuse to accede to what *he proposed*.



ful threat was soon afterwards fulfilled. The Saxon king of Northumberland made an invasion upon Wales, a part of the country inhabited by the Britons ; a battle took place at Bangor, and a large number of monks who attempted to defend themselves, not with arms indeed, but with their prayers and tears, were slaughtered at the command of the cruel king, who treated them as enemies because he heard that they had prayed against him. It has been supposed that Augustine knew and approved of this cruel deed. Of this we cannot perhaps be certain, but we have already seen much in Augustine's character sadly inconsistent with the character of a christian minister. His pride and high-mindedness, and his spirit of anger and revenge, showed that he was very far from being such a bishop as St. Paul so beautifully describes in his Epistles to Timothy and Titus.


Meanwhile the work proceeded. Christianity was preached, professing converts were baptized, and Augustine was well pleased with his success, and with the power and dignity which he enjoyed as head of the Saxon church in Britain. And yet, though we must of course rejoice in the down-fall of idolatry, there is much in all this history of Augustine's labours, which we cannot think quite in accordance with the simplicity of the gospel. His

mode of making converts was very different from that of the first preachers of the gospel in Britain. Augustine seems to have thought more of external show, of outward profession, than of the inward work on the heart which is the all-important part of true religion. And therefore, though we are told that he sometimes baptized many hundred converts in one day, we may fear that they were not all such in the true sense of the word. Perhaps many of them had been induced to become christians from some worldly motive, not from sincere conviction of the truth of christianity; and if so, then they were only mere professors after all, and destitute of that spirit of devotedness which appeared so bright and clear in the characters of Amphibalus and Alban, and the other early christian martyrs.

Augustine labored in this country some years. He died in the year 610, and was buried at Canterbury of which he was the first arch-bishop.

And now, for it is time that we should bring this long chapter to an end, let us just turn to the lines which you read at the commencement.

Perhaps you will ask, what can they have to do with Augustine? I think they may shew us, by the force of contrast, what it was that *was* deficient and wrong in his manner of *spreading the knowledge* of christianity in this



country. These lines tell us, and very beautifully too, that one great characteristic of christianity is simplicity, and this distinguishes it from the "complex works of man." When first Christ himself preached the gospel, you know in what manner he did so. Not with pomp, and ceremony, and show, to attract and to allure those who heard him. All that he said and did was in "simplicity,"—the "majestic" simplicity of truth. And so his followers, the first preachers of the gospel, acted. They went about from place to place, simply and earnestly declaring the truth. They did not speak with enticing words to please men; they had only one object, one end in view, and that was the glory of God in the conversion of their hearers. Now how unlike all this was to the pomp and show which Augustine liked so much, and how different from the pride and haughtiness which he displayed. And then these lines tell us how plain and easy the gospel is. Its message is a very short one—"Believe, and live;" and so plain that any one may read and understand it. You remember this was just what Paul and Silas declared to the jailor at Philippi, in answer to his question, "What shall I do to be saved;"—"Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Now this



again, was different from Augustine's teaching. He preached the gospel indeed, we may hope, but then he was not satisfied with simply declaring this great truth, and keeping only to God's revealed word. He mixed up a great many other things with this which were not necessary for him to press upon his converts: telling them, for instance, to submit to the Pope of Rome; and insisting upon other matters which we need not mention just now. Religion in this country, became, from the time of Augustine, more and more corrupt and impure, as we shall see in the future part of our history; and we who live in the present day, should feel thankful for that great improvement which took place some nine hundred years after the time of which we are now speaking; when christianity was restored to us once more, pure and free from superstition.

And now if you ask, what are we to think altogether of Augustine, and his mission to the Saxons in Britain? I will answer you in the words of a learned and good man, who has given us an interesting history of all these different events, and whose wise opinion about them you may like to know. He says, "We are indebted to God's goodness in moving Gregory; Gregory's carefulness in sending *Augustine*; Augustine's forwardness in preach-

ing here ; but, above all, let us bless God's exceeding great favour, that, that doctrine which Augustine planted here but impure, and his successors made worse with watering, is since by the happy Reformation, cleared and refined to the purity of the scriptures."

## X. LIGHT IN A DARK PLACE.


A.D. 734.

This lamp, from off the everlasting throne,  
Mercy brought down ; and, in the sight of Time,  
Stands evermore beseeching men, with tears  
And earnest sighs, to read, believe, and live.

POLLAK.

OUR stories latterly have taken us to distant places ;—to different parts of Britain, and sometimes as far even as Rome. To-day we will remain in one retired spot in the northern part of our country, and take a view of what is going on in the private chamber of a good and venerable man there. You must suppose however, some generations to have passed away since the close of our last chapter. Augustine, you remember, died in 610 ; and what I am now going to state happened more than a century after.

In the north of Britain, in that part of the country which we now call Durham, there *lived in the monastery of Jarrow, a learned and excellent man* who is usually known in



history as the venerable Bede. This man was a monk. We have already mentioned other persons so called. You have not forgotten the monks of Bangor, who were so cruelly killed by order of the pagan king of Northumbria; and you may be disposed to ask who and what the monks were. They were persons who, from religious motives, withdrew from the world, in order that they might devote themselves more entirely to study, and prayer, and works of charity. Sometimes a number of these monks lived together in a community, binding themselves to the observance of certain rules; and the places in which they lived were called monasteries. Jarrow was one of these.

Now we know that christians are commanded to separate themselves from the world; to give their time and thoughts to what is holy and heavenly; and not to care for the pomp, and vanity, and show of earthly things. And yet, true as all this is, we may find something in the lives of these monks which was not altogether right, because not in accordance with certain other rules of God's word; for we must remember, that *every* command of the Bible is to be observed, and that one is not to be preferred above others. Now God made us to be *social* beings,—that is, to mingle one with another in the affairs and duties of life, in

order that we might be mutually helpful, and that more good might be effected by our united efforts, than if we each lived and acted alone. There is more opportunity too, for the exercise of kindness and generosity, and many other christian virtues which we are told to practise, in the world at large, than in the little community of a convent or monastery. And then we may remember that living in the world among our fellow-creatures, in the station of life in which God has placed us, and fulfilling the daily duties which he has appointed, is quite different from being *of* the world, in its spirit, its temper, its vain pleasures and follies. From all these, christians are to keep themselves apart ; though *in* the world, they are not to be *of* the world ; but, at the same time, each is to be a light shining in a dark place,—shedding his bright and useful influence upon all around.

In the early times of which we are speaking, the monks were indeed far from being idle and useless men, as we shall see from what I am going to tell you of Bede and his labours ; and many of them were pious and excellent persons. But in after years, there was much that was very wrong in these monasteries, and in the character and habits of the monks who *inhabited* them. *Theirs* was frequently a life *of selfish idleness*, and though many of them

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obliged themselves to perform certain acts of self-denial and mortification, yet these things were no marks of christian penitence and humility; but too often, we may fear, self-righteous acts, by which they vainly thought to obtain the pardon of their sins, and at last to merit heaven. But we must not forget the Venerable Bede. Bede, as I told you, was an industrious, laborious man, We owe to him a history of the early christian church in Britain; and he did something which was better still than this; he translated a part of the Bible into the language which was then spoken by the inhabitants of our country,—the Anglo-Saxon. At that time, you must remember, the Bible was not distributed through the land, and among the people, as it is now. With the exception of small portions which had been translated, it was to be obtained only in the learned languages; so that the poor and the ignorant, the great mass of the people, could not have understood it, even had it been given them. And then, as the art of printing was yet unknown, every book was written or copied with pen and ink, and this was a work so tedious and laborious that few books could be completed; and those few were very valuable, and difficult to be procured, so that only the rich and the learned thought of purchasing them. These books were beauti-

ful, in their way, as works of art. They were written with great accuracy and neatness; and the margins of their parchment leaves were adorned with paintings in rich colours. The paintings, as well as the transcribing of the books, formed part of the occupation of the monks in the monasteries. Music, and church architecture too, shared a good deal of their attention; so you may suppose that the monks were among the most clever and learned men in the country in those early times.

Many long years Bede spent in the monastery of Jarrow, engaged, as I told you before, in study and in devotion. The translation of the gospel of St. John was the last work he undertook, the labour of his old age, and it was well that his last work should be his best, and that his life should end, as it had been spent, in the service of God, and for the good of men. Bede had now become very infirm. His body was weak, but his mind was yet strong and vigorous; and though he felt that death could not be very far off, he still continued his work; only he was obliged to employ a younger man, one of his fellow-monks at Jarrow, to write for him, when his own hand was too feeble to hold his pen.

And now, picture to yourself a scene in a *quiet chamber*, in the secluded monastery of *Jarrow*. There sits the aged, the venerable

Bede. You may fancy, if you will, his cheeks and brow furrowed with age and study ; and his eyes, once bright, now become dim, though still calm and placid ; and his white hair and beard, and his whole countenance, so peaceful and heavenly. He is looking forward with joy to the end of life, to the end of all his labours, and to the beginning of a better life, and of eternal rest in another world. But aged and infirm as he is, he will not give up those labours yet. The time for rest is not *quite* arrived, and till it is, Bede will work on. He will be found doing his appointed work when his master comes to call him away. And there, beside him, sits another,—a young man. He is very different from the venerable Bede. He has, as yet, passed but a few short years in this world, and life seems all before him. Ah, as we watch him, looking so attentively at his aged companion, listening to every word he utters, and then carefully noting it down in the page before him,—let us hope that he will follow in the steps of Bede, and prove as faithful and as laborious a servant as he !

But what is passing between these two men,—the aged one, and the young ? Let us attend, and listen to what they say. It is the gospel of St. John upon which they are both engaged. One is dictating, the other is tran-



scribing, and the work is nearly done. "There remains now only one chapter, my beloved master," the young monk is saying, "but it is difficult for thee to speak." "It is easy, my son," answered Bede, "take the pen,—dip it in the ink,—write quickly." "Now master," continues the young man, after a few minutes, "now, only one sentence is wanting;" and then a moment passes, and he exclaims again, "It is finished!" "It is finished," cries the dying Bede, "lift up my head, let me sit in the place where I have been accustomed to pray; and now, glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost." These are his last words;—his companion gazes on him, speaks to him,—he heeds not,—he makes no reply;—the spirit is fled, gone to that world of peace, of the inhabitants of which it is said, "They rest from their labours, and their works do follow them."

So died the Venerable Bede. And before we leave in thought his quiet chamber in the monastery of Jarrow, let us remember his useful life, his diligent labours even to the end, his love for God's word, and then try, in some little measure at least, to imitate him, and to be diligent and useful as he was. And particularly, as often as we read the chapter which occupied his dying thoughts,—the last chapter of *St. John's* gospel,—let us remember that

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the translation of it was his last work, his last effort for the glory of God, and for the good of others. Let us feel thankful for his labours with referencetoourselves; for though it was butasmall portion of the Biblewhich he was permitted to translate, yet much honour is due to him, and much gratitude is called for from us, for this, the first attempt made to give the New Testament to the people of England in their native tongue.

## XI. THE BEST AND GREATEST OF THE SAXON KINGS.

A.D. 871—900.

——— Lo, the North anew,  
With stormy nations black, on England poured  
Woes the severest e'er a people felt.  
The Danish raven, lur'd by annual prey,  
Hung o'er the land incessant. Fleet on fleet  
Of barbarous pirates unremitting tore  
The miserable coast.  
Thus cruel ages past, and rare appear'd  
White-mantled Peace, exulting o'er the vale,  
As when with Alfred, from the wilds she came  
To polic'd cities, and protected plains.—THOMSON.

WE must turn again to the affairs of the Saxon Heptarchy. It had continued for nearly four hundred years from the arrival of the Saxons, but now the time was approaching for a new and a different kind of government to be established in this country. You may suppose that it would be very unlikely, almost impossible indeed, that seven kings should all reign contentedly each in his own little territory, *in the same country*, without one ever becoming *more powerful* than the rest, by extending

his authority over his neighbours. And so it happened in the Saxon Heptarchy that, from time to time, one or another of the kings, more ambitious than his fellows, would gain advantages, and become greater than the remaining six. About the year 827, Egbert, the king of Wessex, had acquired a great deal of power in the country. He was the only descendant at that time left from the first Saxon conquerors of Britain; and having gained some victories over the kings then reigning in other parts of the Heptarchy, he became at last, by uniting the seven kingdoms into one, sole sovereign of Britain, or, as we must henceforth call it, of England. From this period commences the more regular history of our country. We shall not, however, find very much to interest us in the reigns of the earlier Saxon kings. Egbert and his successors were chiefly employed in defending themselves from the ravages of some new enemies who, about this time or rather earlier, made their appearance in England; these were the Danes,—the natives of Scandinavia.

The Danes were in many respects not unlike our Saxon ancestors, but they were more ferocious and blood-thirsty. Their very religion was fierce like themselves, and their only idea of happiness, in a future state, was the *enjoyment of fighting, and cutting one another*

and it is well to have our memory stored with them.

But then, there is another and a higher end which we should have in view in the study of history ; something more important than the mere exercise of memory in the knowledge of facts, I mean *moral improvement*. Now, in order that this may be gained, it is necessary not only to learn, and to remember, but also to observe, and to think. We must notice the characters of remarkable persons, and their actions too, for our own example or warning ; we must observe the wonderful progress of events, and mark how each depends upon the one just before it ; and trace them all up to their first commencement, and down to their final consequences, in order that we may see in them the hand of God ruling the affairs of the world, and ordering them all according to His own wise and gracious purposes. This is what I hope we shall always try to do when we read history ; and then we shall not only gain knowledge for the *head*, but we shall learn something which may also benefit the *heart*. And now let us return to Alfred,—the greatest and the best of our Saxon kings.

It is well to trace great people, as well as great events, from their beginnings, and therefore we will commence the history of Alfred, with an account of his childhood. I am sure

you will like to know what so good a man was when young, and how he felt, and how he acted, as a little boy. We first read of him when accompanying his father to Rome ; but as he was then only six years old, he was not probably much improved or benefited by the expedition ; for though he was an intelligent, he was by no means a forward child. What will you say when I tell you, that he was nearly twelve years old before he could either read or write ? This, however, was not owing to any idleness or inattention on Alfred's part. In those days, knowledge was very rare, and very limited. Few knew much, and many knew nothing. Books were scarce, and teachers were not easily found ; so that English children then, were not like English children now, well instructed from infancy, and supplied with books, and pictures, and maps, and everything that can make learning pleasant and easy to them, almost as soon as they can speak. No, they were left in ignorance usually until they themselves found out how sad a thing ignorance is ; and in many cases, perhaps, this was never found out at all ; and such remained in ignorance all their lives. Happily, it was not so with Alfred.

And now, let us see how it was that Alfred first became fond of learning. Ignorant as he was, he always enjoyed poetry ; and though

he could not read it himself, he was delighted to hear it read to him. It so happened that, one day, his mother, Queen Judith, was reading aloud a Saxon poem to Alfred and her other children; and when they all admired it, and the beautiful paintings with which it was adorned, she promised to make a present of the book to whichever of them would first learn to read it. The other boys thought the poem was not worth the trouble of learning to read; so they did not even make the attempt. But Alfred felt very differently from his brothers. From that day, he determined he would remain in ignorance no longer. So he at once found a person who was able and willing to teach him; and he was so quick and diligent, that, in a short time, he was able not only to read, but also to repeat the poem to his mother; and then he received the book as his reward. Perhaps it would be difficult to say which was the happier of the two at that moment, Queen Judith or her little boy. His present was indeed a valuable one. A beautiful illuminated book was a gift seldom bestowed upon children in those days, when such things were so scarce and rare. But Alfred well deserved his reward; and no doubt, in after life, he often looked upon it with very great pleasure, because *it was that book* that made him first wish for *knowledge*, and led him to so much enjoyment.

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which he had never thought of before. The day when he was first able to read for himself, was an important epoch in Alfred's life, as indeed it is in the life of every child. Then it is that a wide field of knowledge is opened before us, and it is our own fault, and it will be our own misfortune too, if we do not rightly improve such opportunities of becoming wise, and good, and happy, as are given to us when we once have the power of reading for ourselves.

Alfred, however, had not the advantages of children in the present day, even when he had taken these first steps in knowledge. There were very few books for him to read in his own language ; Latin he did not understand, and not many people in England at that time did understand it ; so that it was difficult for him to find a teacher. But Alfred having once begun to feel the pleasure of learning, was resolved to go on. He found at last a person able to instruct him, and then he set to work again, with the same diligence as before, and with the same success ; for he was soon able to read and understand Latin. Perhaps you would like to know how it was that he learnt so quickly. One of his plans was this. He used every day to copy out one Latin sentence ; this he carried about with him, and read over *and over again*, till he knew every word of it



perfectly. Then he copied out another ; and learnt that ; and he went on, day after day, until he had acquired a large store of Latin words and phrases. No doubt Alfred was a quick clever boy ; but he would not have made the rapid progress he did, had he not also been diligent and industrious. It would be well for English boys and girls, if they were to make as good a use of all the advantages they enjoy, as Alfred did of the far smaller ones given to him.

Thus Alfred's early years passed away pleasantly and profitably in acquiring knowledge ; and while doing this, he was gaining also from his studies something more important still,—habits of industry, and perseverance, and self-discipline ; and a power of overcoming difficulties, and mastering whatever he undertook. For we must remember, that, valuable as learning is, it is, after all, the habits of mind which are formed in acquiring knowledge, and which fit the learner for afterwards wisely applying it in the duties of life, which are the great ends to be considered in study. Knowledge in general, as I said just now of one particular branch of it, is, in itself, of but little use. It is like a heap of stones gathered together in a field, or a mass of gold laid up in a chest, things very good and valuable, but still of no benefit until formed into something

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really useful. The stones, for instance, may be built up into a house to live in, or into a wall to protect our property : and the gold may be coined into money, and applied to purposes of trade and commerce, or it may be made into various beautiful and useful articles ; and then everybody will see its value, and the owners, and others too, will be the better for it. And so with knowledge. It should not be allowed to remain unemployed, in our own brain or memory ; it should be brought out wisely and diligently, and made available for the formation of our minds and characters, and for our direction and guidance in the various affairs and concerns of life.


Now this was just what Alfred was preparing for ; and the time soon came when he was to bring all his good habits, and good principles, and various kinds of knowledge, into action. When he was not much more than twenty years of age, his brother, king Ethelred, died ; and then Alfred succeeded to the throne. This was no easy position for so young a man, and especially in times such as those were. England was in a state of constant danger and distraction from the frequent incursions of the Danes, who were now ravaging the country ; and Alfred's first duty, when he became king, was to oppose these formidable enemies. And this, though a necessary,

must have been a self-denying duty to Alfred. Fond as he was of his books and his studies, he would far rather have devoted his time to such quiet pursuits, than to war and fighting. But Alfred could not now do as he liked ; he must provide, before doing any thing else, for the good and safety of his country and of his subjects. This required a great deal of wisdom and patience. He found his soldiers, at this time, very little able to help him in struggling with the Danes. They were so completely disheartened as to feel indisposed to make any further resistance ; for it seemed to them quite impossible now to conquer these fierce enemies. So Alfred thought it necessary, for his own safety, to leave his palace for a time, and to live in concealment, till he could collect a sufficient number of troops to carry on more regular warfare. He retired into Somersetshire, and lived unknown, disguised like a peasant, in the cottage of a farmer, who little thought what an important person was sheltered under his humble roof. It was while there that Alfred fell into such sad disgrace with the farmer's wife, for burning the cakes she had entrusted to him to toast. That well-known story you have so often heard, that I need not repeat it to you here. You may not know, however, that that farmer became a much more distinguished person. Al-

fred had him properly instructed ; and he finally became Bishop of Winchester.

While Alfred was thus living in disguise, he continued to hear, from time to time, how matters were going on with the Danes ; and at last he was told that some advantages had been gained over them, and that he might now safely leave his hiding-place, and attack his enemies with some hope of success. So he bade farewell to his kind host and hostess, the farmer and his wife, and then, with a few of his followers, he took up his abode in the isle of Athelney or Nobles, an island formed by the junction of the rivers Thone and Parret, in Somersetshire. From this spot, he and his soldiers often made incursions upon the Danes. But in order that Alfred might do this with success, it was necessary that he should know more of the state in which the Danes were ;—what their strength really was, and what prospect there might be of subduing them.

But how could all this be found out ?—that was the difficulty. Alfred at last thought of a very clever and ingenious plan for discovering his enemies' secrets,—and it was this. He dressed himself like a travelling musician ; and then, taking his harp, on which he had learnt to play very well, he went into the Danish camp. The Danes, of course, never guessed who he really was ; and as they were fond of



music, they admitted him without much difficulty ; and soon he made himself so pleasant and agreeable, that he was introduced into the tent of Guthrum the Danish prince. Here Alfred had a capital opportunity of finding out what the Danes really were. He soon discovered that they were very self-confident ; very careless and negligent ; and that they despised the English, and thought them very contemptible enemies. Having ascertained all these points, Alfred felt sure that the conquest of the Danes would not be so difficult as he had supposed ; for when people are conceited, self-sufficient, careless, and contemptuous, they are much more likely to be humbled by others, than those are who are distrustful of themselves, and therefore watchful, and diligent, and careful.

So, after a few days, Alfred went back in good spirits, summoned his scattered soldiers, told them all he had heard and seen, and encouraged them to make another effort to subdue the Danes. His subjects were delighted to see him again, and to find that there was still a prospect of success. They rallied round their king, and attacked the enemy again with great vigour and spirit. The Danes were surprised to see the English, whom they despised so much, thus coming against them with Alfred at their head. Numerous as they

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were they were very soon conquered by the determined courage of the English soldiers ; and those of them who escaped and fled, were compelled by hunger to submit to Alfred, and to any terms he might propose. And now, Alfred showed himself a generous conqueror to his vanquished enemies. He not only spared their lives, but he promised to be their friend and protector, if they would only submit to certain conditions. They were to assist him in any future wars against their countrymen ; and they were to renounce idolatry, and become Christians ; and then he said he would give them a portion of the country to live in, and treat them just as he treated his own people and subjects. The Danes were quite willing to submit to these proposals, and in a short time they were quietly settled in their new territory, and gave Alfred no further trouble for some years.

And now that peace was at last restored, you may suppose how gladly Alfred returned to his favourite pursuits and studies. He had already shown much skill in his conquest of the Danes, and much generosity in his kind treatment of them after that conquest. Now he was going to give other proofs of his wisdom, and of his love of doing good, in the manner in which he ruled his kingdom and his subjects. I must tell you some of the

things which he did, which were so important and useful that they have caused us to remember and to love the name of Alfred even to the present day.

His great wish was to establish justice in his kingdom, by making good laws, and by taking care that those laws should be obeyed. For this purpose, he divided the country into counties and hundreds, and appointed various magistrates, and courts of justice; and his plans succeeded so well that it is said, that when one day, in order to try the honesty of his people, he hung up golden bracelets by the way-side, no one dared to touch them! Perhaps this story may not be quite true, but it would not have been even invented, had not the laws been really well observed in Alfred's days.

But we must not think that this good king was too strict and rigid with his people, or that he ruled over them with harshness. No; his strictness, as to law and justice, was only intended to increase their happiness, and to give them true and real liberty, which they could not have enjoyed in a country where every body might act as he pleased, without regard to his neighbour's rights and convenience. There was a saying which Alfred used often to repeat, and which we should always remember in connection with him, because it shows how much he valued true liberty, and

how desirous he was to secure it for his people. He used to say, "It is just that the English should always be as free as their own thoughts."

But there were other things which Alfred did for his country, besides establishing laws and justice. Though he had for the present made friends of the Danes, he thought it would be well to prepare against future invasion from them or from any other enemies; and he wisely considered that the best way of resisting foes from foreign countries, was to have a good navy and army of his own, with skilful sailors and brave soldiers to fight. So he had a great many vessels built, and a great many soldiers trained; and thus the country was made much more secure from invasion than it had been before.

But this was not all. You may suppose how dear learning still was to Alfred, and how frequently he remembered his own early difficulties in the pursuit of knowledge. This made him wish to smooth the way a little for others. He found his countrymen in general very ignorant. Not one person south of the river Thames was able to translate the Latin service, and very few of those in the northern parts of the country had learning enough to do so. Now Alfred knew, from his own experience, that knowledge would enable his



people to become both happier and more useful; and as he always sought to benefit them in every way, he determined to encourage learning by all the means in his power. He established schools, and desired parents to send their children to be instructed. He founded, or rather revived, the university of Oxford for the education of the higher classes, and he sent for clever and learned men from other countries to assist in instructing the English. Alfred encouraged his people too to diligence in learning by his own example. He was still as studious as he had been when a boy; and though he had now many other things to attend to, yet he contrived to arrange all his occupations so well, that he found time for reading and recreation, as well as for matters of business and concerns of state.

But how could Alfred regulate his time so exactly, for in those days neither clocks nor watches had been invented,—at ~~least~~ they were not yet much in use. I will tell you. He thought of a most ingenious plan, which he found would answer his purpose of dividing time almost as well as a clock or a watch would have done. He had a quantity of wax made into a number of candles, all of the same size. These candles, lighted in succession, one after another, lasted twenty-four hours. It was easy therefore to see that half the number

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would last twelve hours ; and a third part of the number eight hours ; and a quarter of the number six hours. The divisions of the hours were marked on the wax ; so that Alfred could tell exactly how far a candle would burn in a given time. These candles were enclosed in lanterns, that they might burn more steadily ; for the air, blowing in through the cracks and crevices of Alfred's palace, would soon have disturbed the regularity of his wax clock.

Alfred now divided his day of twenty-four hours, into three equal portions : one part he gave to the affairs of his kingdom ; another to devotion and study ; and the third to sleep, and necessary refreshment and recreation. He bestowed the greatest part of his attention upon his country and people ; for even his studies were devoted to their benefit. He translated into Anglo-Saxon, many books which he thought would interest and instruct them ; and particularly some portions of Scripture.

Alfred reigned nearly thirty years ; and, with the exception of some further trouble with his old enemies the Danes, the greater part of those years passed quietly and happily. He died beloved and regretted by all his subjects, and left behind him a name which, as I told you, will be always dear to every English heart. Alfred will ever be remembered as


the best and the greatest of all the Saxon kings.

And now, though this chapter has already been so long, I cannot conclude it, without saying a few words more to you on the character and conduct of this good king, before we take our final leave of him. We have already spoken of his diligence, and his generosity, and his love of doing good ;—let us now talk a little about his regularity, in the division and use which he made of his time. You know that there is a great difference in the various gifts and blessings which God, in his providence, is pleased to bestow upon us, His creatures. Health, property, talents, learning,—all these things are distributed in various measures and degrees ; some have more of them, and others less ; but there is one gift which we all have ; we have it every day we live, and each person has an equal quantity of it every day, as long as life is continued to him. This gift is time. Now it is very common to hear people say, “ We have no time to do this or that ; if we had the leisure which others have, we might be able to do much more ; but the days are so short, and there is so much work for each of them, that it is quite impossible to get through all the business we have in hand.” And it is quite true, that each of us has, or may have, so much work to do as to leave no

hour of the day unemployed. But still it often happens that the people who talk in this way, are those who have least to do, or rather, those who do least. Their days, like Alfred's, are twenty-four hours long, and few can have more business than *he* had, or of a more arduous kind ; and yet we have seen that he could find time for every thing he had to do ; nothing was neglected in his twenty-four hours, which was necessary or important. Now how was this ? Can we find out why Alfred's days contained so much more of what was good and useful, than many of ours usually do ? or must we conclude, that there was some particular magic in his wax clock, which made an Anglo-Saxon hour longer than an ordinary English one in the nineteenth century ? I believe there was no secret or magic in the matter ; it may be all explained very easily. Alfred knew how to *regulate* his time and his occupations, and this is the lesson I want to impress on you just now. Did you ever hear of a rule in arithmetic called Proportion, or the Rule of Three ? I think that rule might sometimes be applied with advantage to the division of time ; especially as we have been speaking of Alfred's *three-fold* division of time, and of his giving a due *proportion* of it to each employment in the day. Now suppose that the people we have just been referring to, were to make some such regula-

tion of their time as Alfred did ; and to devote eight hours to sleep, eight hours to study, and eight hours to business. And suppose they were to keep to their plan seriously and steadily for one week, or for one month,—and really to work in their business-hours, and really to learn in their studious ones,—I think they would, at the end of that time, wonder to see how much had been accomplished, simply by arrangement and regularity. And even those, many of whose hours belong to others who pay them for their labour, and so have a right to claim it of them, might secure some time for the improvement of their minds, as well as for necessary rest, by a little forethought and contrivance. It is often for want of these, that so much time is wasted and lost. And what a fearful thing it is to lose and waste time ! We shall feel this, if we consider why it was given us, and what we have to do, both for ourselves and others, while our appointed allotment of it continues.

And we should not forget another thing which made Alfred's time pass so pleasantly and so usefully, and which indeed gave success to all his other occupations. One part of it was spent in devotion ;—in prayer, and in the study of God's word, and in preparation for that eternity which will commence with each of us when time ends. Ah, whatever we have



to do, these are things which should *never* be omitted. To find no time for them, is to lose time given to any thing besides. For nothing can really prosper, as regards either this world or the next, without God's blessing ; and that blessing will not be ours unless we seek for it, daily and diligently, as did this Christian king.

Time destroy'd  
Is suicide, where more than blood is spilt.  
Time flies, death urges, knells call, heaven invites,  
Hell threatens : all exerts, in effort, all :  
Man sleeps, and man alone ; and man whose fate,  
Fate irreversible, entire, extreme,  
Endless, hair-hung, breeze-shaken, o'er the gulf  
A moment trembles ; drops ! and man, for whom  
All else is in alarm ! man, the sole cause  
Of this surrounding storm ! and yet he sleeps,  
As the storm rock'd to rest. Throw years away ?  
Throw empires, and be blameless ! Moments seize ;  
Heaven's on their wing ; a moment we may wish,  
When worlds want wealth to buy.

YOUNG.

## XII. THE LOVE OF POWER, AND WHAT IT LEADS TO.


A.D. 900—978.

O Conscience ! who can stand before thy power,  
Endure thy gripes and agonies one hour ?  
No pleasures, riches, honours, friends can tell  
How to give ease in this :—'tis like to hell.  
Call for the pleasant timbrel, lute, and harp ;  
Alas ! the music howls,—the pain's too sharp  
For these to charm, divert, or lull asleep :  
These cannot reach it ; no, the wound's too deep.

FLAVEL.

WE will pass quickly over the reigns of the Saxon kings who were Alfred's immediate successors, as there is not much to interest you in their lives and histories. I must, however, tell you their names, and just one or two particulars about each of them, to help you to remember those names better.


Alfred's son, Edward, succeeded him on the throne. He is usually called Edward the Elder, because he was the first king of England who bore that name. He was a brave and clever man, but not equal to his father in learning. The chief part of his reign was



spent in quieting disturbances, both among his own people, and from their old enemies the Danes. Then came king Athelstan. He too was warlike, and fought battles, and gained victories over the Scotch, and over some of the northern pirates. He ruled well at home also, and made some good laws, and took care that they should be obeyed. One of these was very remarkable, and worth remembering in connection with Athelstan. It was, that every man who should make three long voyages at his own expense, should thenceforth be considered as a Thane or nobleman. Athelstan made this regulation in order to encourage commerce and enterprize among his people.

The next king was named Edmund. His reign was short, and it ended in a very melancholy manner, Edmund was killed by a robber named Leolf, while he was celebrating a festival with some of his nobles and attendants. Then followed, in succession, Edred, Edwy, and Edgar; and in their reigns there lived and flourished a very celebrated person who is closely associated with this part of English history. His name was Dunstan. I must tell you a little about him.

Dunstan was a man of high rank and great talents. His early years were passed in the monastery of Glastonbury; afterwards he became bishop of Winchester, and of London; and





lastly he was made archbishop of Canterbury. You remember, when we were talking of Bede, I told you that many of the monks of his day were good and useful men ; but that, in after times, they were frequently persons of a very different character. We shall find that this was true in regard to Dunstan. He had indeed great capability of being useful. He was distinguished for his knowledge, and his skill, particularly in the arts. He was an excellent painter and musician, he sang very well ; he engraved in metals ; he could work in iron, and was a great maker of bells. He had a forge of his own, at which he spent a great deal of his time in the earlier part of his life. All this was well ; for these various kinds of knowledge might be turned to good account, for the benefit of his fellow-countrymen. But unhappily, Dunstan was a selfish and an ambitious man. His great desire was not to do good, but to gain power ; not to benefit others, but to raise himself.

During the last three reigns I mentioned, Dunstan exercised very wrong and improper influence even over the sovereigns to whom he owed obedience. It happened that king Edwy, having just cause to be displeased with his conduct, banished him from the country. This made Dunstan very angry, and he determined to be revenged ; and the vengeance he took

was exercised upon Elgiva, the beautiful wife of Edwy. Dunstan commissioned some of his party, who remained in England during his own banishment, to brand the poor queen on the face with hot irons; and from the cruel treatment which she received from them then and afterwards, Elgiva in a short time died. Dunstan returned from banishment, and became increasingly haughty and over-bearing in his conduct both towards Edwy and towards his successor Edgar, who was still more under his power and authority. Dunstan's object was to attain for his own party, the monks, a greater degree of power than they had before possessed; and any one who attempted to oppose him in his attempt, was sure to feel the cruel vengeance of this wicked man.

Dunstan endeavoured too, to impose upon the people by pretending that he had the power of working miracles; and even when just about to die, he permitted those around him to declare, that, on a certain day, angels would appear to bear him away, like Elijah, to the glory of heaven; and many were ignorant enough to believe that this would really be done. But I think we have said enough about Dunstan for the present.

Before we go on to the next king, I may tell you of one very good thing which was done in Edgar's reign. This was the destruc-

tion of wolves in this country. You may remember, that in one of our early chapters, I told you that, in former times, England was much infested with wild beasts which concealed themselves by day in the thick woods, and issued out at night for the destruction of the inhabitants or their property. Wolves still abounded in the mountains and forests of Wales; and they would probably have continued there some time longer, had not Edgar thought of a plan for getting rid of them altogether. For some time past, the Welsh princes had been obliged to pay tribute to the kings of England. This had hitherto been given in money; but Edgar wisely made a change; and instead of requiring any other payment, he levied an annual tax upon the Welsh of three hundred wolves' heads. This plan cleared the country in a short time of these dangerous animals.

Edgar's successor was called Edward the Younger: he was a very mild and amiable prince, and only fifteen years old when he began to reign. Nothing very particular took place during the four years he was king; but there is a sad story connected with his death, which I must tell you; and this, perhaps, is all that you will be interested in hearing about in poor young Edward.

Edward was the eldest son of Edgar, and therefore succeeded him at his death. His

own mother was not living, but he had a step-mother named Elfrida, and she had a little boy of her own, who was only seven years old, who was called Ethelred. Elfrida wished very much that this child should be made king; but of course that could not be, and Edward was accordingly generally acknowledged as sovereign. Elfrida could not forget her disappointment; and instead of submitting to the young prince, who was the rightful heir of the throne, in a proper spirit, she secretly cherished very unkind and wicked feelings in the matter, and was continually thinking how she could get rid of Edward, and obtain the crown for her own son. And what makes this feeling in Elfrida appear still more heartless and cruel, is the amiable conduct of young Edward towards her. He did not in any way reproach her for what she had tried to do; he never triumphed over her disappointment, and his own success. On the contrary, he always treated her with great respect; and frequently went to see her at Corfe Castle in Dorsetshire where she resided, little suspecting the cruel plan which she was all this time forming against him.

One day, Edward, while out on a hunting expedition, went to pay a visit to his step-mother, Elfrida. Before he left Corfe Castle, feeling thirsty, he asked for some refreshment,

and one of the attendants went immediately to fetch it. While he was drinking, he felt a sudden blow from behind. It came from another of Elfrida's servants, whom she had actually commissioned to stab the young king; thinking this a good opportunity of carrying into execution the cruel scheme she had been planning so long. Edward soon perceived what had been done, and guessed the cause; and with all speed he left the castle, and rode homewards as fast as his horse could carry him. But the wound he had received proved fatal. He soon fainted from loss of blood, and was dragged along by his horse, until he expired. He was found by his servants lying dead upon the road, taken up, and buried privately at Wareham.

Edward had been beloved while alive; and now that he was dead, the ignorant and superstitious people, in their affection and veneration for his memory, declared that miracles were performed at his tomb, and they took long journeys to visit it, and to show their love and respect for their young king whom they called a martyr. You may suppose how much the cruel Elfrida was blamed and hated, when it was known what part she had taken in this dreadful deed. The punishment of her *wickedness* now began; for though she had *her wish* in seeing her son Ethelred placed on

the throne, as the successor of Edward, yet she enjoyed no real happiness, no peace of mind from that moment. She felt that she had been guilty of a dreadful crime; and she knew how much she was detested for having committed it. And then came the dread of punishment,—if not in this world, yet in another; for Elfrida, ignorant as she might have been, was fully aware that there is a future state, and an account to be rendered of all the actions performed here. No wonder then, if the thought of her own guilt filled her with terror. But she knew not the right,—the only way of obtaining pardon for that guilt. She thought that money given to the poor, and other acts of charity, and self-mortification and penance, would gain for her the forgiveness of her sins. So she built churches, and founded monasteries, and said a number of prayers, and performed a number of acts of self-denial, which she vainly thought would quiet her conscience, and give her peace; but which *we*, who have the Bible for our guide, well know cannot be of any avail for such a purpose. No suffering of ours can take away sin, and no fancied good actions of ours can purchase pardon. Elfrida would gain no real benefit from all she did; and we have every reason to fear that she died as she had *lived*, *without comfort, and without hope.*

There were other Saxon kings after Edward and Ethelred, but we will reserve them for another day, and close our chapter when we have talked a little more about the persons of whom we have just been reading. We cannot in history, always find people and characters just what we could wish them to be. We must be content to take them as they really were, and then to draw from them the best lessons we can; and sometimes we shall find lessons of warning from wicked people, quite as useful for us, as lessons of example from good people. Now to-day, we have had two characters brought before us which I fear we must call bad characters;—I mean those of Dunstan and Elfrida; and though it will not certainly be so pleasant to talk about them, as it was to talk about Alfred and Bede, yet we will see if we cannot learn something from their faults for our own instruction.

What was the great fault of Dunstan? It was, I think, undue love of power; a desire to be head and chief; and to rule over those even to whom he owed subjection and obedience. Now I need not tell you, how contrary such a spirit as this is to that lowliness and meekness which the Bible teaches when it says, “Be clothed with humility;” and “In lowliness of *mind* let each esteem other better than themselves.” But it is more difficult to attain this

than perhaps you imagine; and of Dunstan is by no means so may be inclined to suppose only, manners and customs on what they were in the degree modify and character. Still we often by grown up people, but in their little way, exercising, giving a preference to their inclinations, and opinions, to others; and doing all they can on their neighbours, and to set up; to make every body yield to them, to their purposes. Now this may be way of getting on in life, but it certainly not the way either to be loved or respected. Such persons as these may succeed in their endeavours; they may get the uppermost places in the world, and they may make others bow and yield to them; but they will, in all probability, live unloved, and die unregretted. Do you think such a kind of power as this is worth striving after? And is such a plan of conduct *wise* as regards our own happiness, even supposing it were *right*, which you know it is not, and cannot be?

And now let us turn to the other character in to-day's lesson, and see what is to be learnt from that. I mean Elfrida's. There are some



points in which she resembled Dunstan,—in ambition, and love of distinction and power; only her efforts were made rather for the promotion of her son than of herself. And then, besides this, we see, in the sad story of the murder of Edward, how dreadful are the effects of one secret wrong feeling in the heart, unconquered and unrestrained. There was nothing on Edward's part to excite revenge, or hatred, or even dislike in Elfrida; but just because he stood in the way of her own son's elevation to the throne, and of her own plans for his promotion, Edward must be sacrificed,—cruelly murdered,—innocent and amiable as he was. Ah, this shows us how wicked and deceitful the human heart is, and how one sin, if it is not restrained, will assuredly lead to another. Perhaps Elfrida had no thought, at first, of becoming the murderer of Edward. But the ruling desire of her mind, growing stronger and stronger, led her on from ambition to jealousy, and from jealousy to hatred, and from hatred actually to murder. Learn then to suppress the first beginnings of evil,—wrong wishes and desires,—while they exist only in the heart and in the thoughts; for, if not overcome, they will certainly at last show themselves in action, and bring upon you much sorrow and remorse. We have seen what *Elfrida* suffered from the consciousness of her

guilt, when it was too late for her sorrow to be of any use, or to undo what had already been done. Sorrow always follows sin. Even the gratification of a wrong desire, must in the end bring pain and disappointment. Then will it not be wise, wise in the best sense of the word, to cherish only such wishes and such desires as are in themselves right; which will certainly be gratified, and which cannot end in disappointment? such, I mean, as those good men had, of whom we were reading the other day,—desires of glorifying God, and of benefiting man.

### XIII. ANOTHER CONQUEST.

A.D. 979—1066.

Ev'n as a flower, or like unto the grass,  
Which now doth stand, and straight with scythe doth  
fall ;  
So is our state ; now here, now hence we pass ;  
For Time attends with shredding scythe for all.  
And Death at length both old and young doth strike,  
And into dust doth turn us all alike.  
O happy they, who pondering this aright,  
Before that here their pilgrimage be past ;  
Resign this world ; and march with all their might  
Within that path that leads where joys shall last.  
And, whilst they may, there treasure up their store,  
Where, without rust, it lasts for evermore.  
This world must change, that world shall still endure ;  
Here, pleasures fade ; there shall they endless be ;  
Here, man doth sin ; and there he shall be pure ;  
Here, death he tastes ; and there shall never die.  
Here, hath he grief ; and there shall joys possess,  
As none hath seen, nor any heart can guess."

WHITNEY.

THE reign of Ethelred was very far from being a happy one. You will not be surprized to hear this ; for beginning as it did in a murder, *peace and blessing* could hardly be expected *in the events* which followed. And then, there

was nothing in Ethelred's character which was likely to form either a good or a great king. As he grew up, he showed himself to be weak and unprincipled, and without any capacity for governing others. Perhaps his early education, and Elfrida's bad example, might have had much to do with all this. It is certain that the future life of a child depends very greatly upon early instruction and example; and thus it has been said, that there never was a truly great man who had not been brought up by a good mother. For you know that it is the mother who usually forms the first habits and impressions, and who gives the early bias to the mind, by her instruction and training; and this is seldom altogether lost in after years. How thankful then those children should be who are blessed with such mothers as will guide them in the right way; and how careful they should be to follow on, obediently and carefully, in the path which will lead them to happiness now and hereafter. It was different indeed with poor Ethelred.


The Danes soon took advantage of Ethelred's carelessness, and of his weak mode of governing. They made another invasion, and found the English were not in a state to resist them; for the king was always too late in preparing for battle; and so he came to have a name given to him which was not much to



knowledge him as king. This they did; but Sweyn died before he was established in his new territory, and was succeeded by his son Canute. Ethelred was no more able to conquer the son, than he had been to conquer the father; and his own death, which followed soon after, threw the country into a fresh state of confusion. He died neither respected nor regretted by his people.

Ethelred was succeeded by his son Edmund, who was called Ironsides, from his great strength. He was a much more active and sensible man than his father; and perhaps, at an earlier period, he might have been able to drive away the Danes; but now it was too late. In a battle which took place between him and Canute, the power of the Danes was still more firmly established; and Edmund was obliged to consent that Canute should share the kingdom with him. In less than a year, however, Edmund was murdered, and then Canute became sole king. And thus, we see, these troublesome invaders, the Danes, contrived at last actually to possess and to rule over England!

Canute was, however, a great king, and there are many points in his character for us to admire. He was, by profession, a Christian; and though there was much of *superstition mixed* in what he did and said, yet he



seems to have been a sincere man, and really desirous of doing right. Like other great monarchs, Canute found, as he grew older, that the riches and honours of this world are unable to give real happiness ; like one greater than himself, he discovered that "all is vanity and vexation of spirit ;" and so, in the latter part of his life, he spent his time not in the follies and pleasures of the world, but in acts of devotion, and in charity. Now if, like Elfrida, he ignorantly thought that deeds of this kind had in them some sort of merit, and the power of purchasing pardon for sin, or eternal life in heaven, he was indeed sadly mistaken, and we can only feel sorry that in the days in which he lived there was so little known of real religion, and of the Christianity which the Bible teaches. But however this may have been, there is one little circumstance recorded in Canute's history which may afford us such a useful lesson, that I will not pass it over, though it is very possible that you may have heard or read it before.

It happened one day that Canute was sitting by the sea-shore, quietly watching the tide which was just rising. After all the turmoil and fighting of his early years, we may imagine how much Canute must have delighted in the calmness which he was able to enjoy *at such an hour as that* ; and perhaps, as he

gazed on the sea before him, many thoughts might have arisen in his mind of a sad or a solemn kind; for he was a man who loved to reflect, and to moralize on what he saw. We may almost guess what his thoughts were at that moment,—perhaps they were something like those expressed in the following pretty lines :

In ev'ry object here I see  
Something, my heart, that points at thee.  
Hard as the rocks that bound the strand,  
Unfruitful as the barren sand :  
Deep and deceitful as the ocean,  
And, like the tides, in constant motion.

But the noblemen who surrounded Canute, were not very much disposed to leave him to his own reflections. They might have been indeed anxious to please him, but they seem not quite to have understood the way to do so. Now it is important, when we try to please others, to attend to two things; first, to find out what will really give them pleasure, because people differ very much in their likings and dislikings; and then, secondly, to take care that, in so pleasing them, we do not injure our friends by saying or doing what is unwise or unsuitable. Canute's attendants did not understand either of these rules. They talked to the king in a way which was very far *from giving him pleasure*; and what they said



might have had a very injurious effect upon him, had he not been too old, or rather too wise, to be misled by their foolish words.

These noblemen attempted to flatter Canute. They talked to him of his grandeur, and his riches, and his power; and then they actually went so far as to tell him, that nothing was impossible to him, and that every thing in nature, even the sea itself, would obey his commands. Now some princes would have been pleased to hear these vain and wicked speeches, for such indeed they were. I dare say you remember one king who, when he was extolled as a god for an oration which he delivered to his courtiers, accepted their foolish praise without reproving the men who gave it. But it was not so with Canute. He did not indeed at first make any remark; but as he kept his eyes fixed on the rising sea before him, he addressed the waves, and commanded them to retire, and not to approach the feet of their lord and sovereign. But the sea heeded him not, nor did Canute expect it would. Wave followed wave, and each approached nearer and nearer to the king as he sat on the shore; for the tide was coming in, and it would, he knew, soon advance beyond the spot on which his seat was placed. At *last one great wave dashed over his feet, and Canute was obliged to retire; and as he did*

so, he turned to his courtiers, and gently said, "There is but one being whom the billows will obey, even He who hath said to the ocean, Hitherto shalt thou come, and no further; and here shall thy proud waves be stayed."

Now just picture this scene to yourselves. The bright summer evening; the beautiful green waves dashing upon the beach; the quiet of the country around; the thoughtful monarch musing upon all he saw, and his vain courtiers trying to amuse him with flattery, when his mind was intent upon higher and better things. And then fancy you hear him giving this simple but beautiful lesson on God's sovereignty, to his thoughtless companions, and repeating that sublime verse of scripture, to teach them to reverence, as almighty, only that eternal God who made the world, and with whom all things are possible. I cannot tell you what effect the reproof had upon Canute's nobles, or how far they profited from his wisdom; but, at all events, let *us* learn from the story these two things;—the vanity of the world's enjoyments, which Canute himself has taught us; and the folly and sin of either giving or receiving flattery, which we may learn from his courtiers.

It is wrong to *bestow* flattery; wrong, because flattery always implies something beyond truth; *it is giving a greater degree of praise than is*

merited ; and therefore it is, in fact, a kind of falsehood. And it is wrong too to *accept* flattery ; because, to say nothing of the extreme folly of believing, or appearing to believe, what is so far from the truth, it is encouraging others in a habit of deception very injurious to themselves ; as every deviation from the truth must always be. And then, there is another thing to be remembered about flattery, in regard to the *motive* from which it very often springs. Those who flatter usually expect to be flattered in return. They are generally vain persons, who love praise so much that they would rather have false praise than none at all. So that, in whatever way we consider flattery, we see that it is a bad thing, and quite inconsistent with right feelings and right principles. Try to remember all this, and then Canute will not have uttered those memorable words in vain, at least for *you*.

I need not say much about the next two kings who reigned in England,—Harold and Hardicanute, Canute's sons. They were famous rather for bodily strength than for vigour of mind ; and nothing of any particular interest occurred during their reigns. When Hardicanute died, there was no heir to succeed him in the Danish line ; so the people thought *this a good opportunity* to restore the Saxon family ; and accordingly Edward, who is

usually called the Confessor, a son of Ethelred, was placed on the throne. Edward was a meek, amiable man, but not well fitted to be the sovereign of a great nation. He was fond of quiet pursuits ; spent much time in devotion, and gave a great deal of money for the building of churches ; but I fear there was more of superstitious feeling than of real religion in his character. In those days, very little of enlightened Christianity was to be found, among the errors and ignorance which had become so general.

There is one act of Edward the Confessor which I must not forget to mention. He collected all the best laws of the previous kings, and formed them into one code, which was held in much estimation for many years.

There lived in this reign a nobleman who had acquired great power in the country, and whose name has a conspicuous place in this part of our history,—Earl Godwin, a daughter of whom was married to Edward the Confessor. Godwin was a very ambitious man ; and the power which he possessed, and the weak government of Edward, led him to hope that his own son Harold might hereafter become king of England ; for Edward had no child to whom to leave his crown. This plan of Godwin's, however, was not in accordance with the wishes of the Confessor ; and he began, when he



## THE CONQUEST.

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grew old and infirm, to look about in other directions for a successor. There was one heir of the Saxon line yet remaining, named Edgar Atheling; but he was very young, and weak, and inexperienced, and therefore not likely to be acceptable to the people. But Edward had another distant relative in Normandy, named William, the duke of that country, who seemed to him better fitted to reign over England than either Edgar or Harold; and a communication passed between them, in which Edward told William that he should like to adopt him for his heir. I ought to say, that the kings of England had for some time been connected with the dukes of Normandy. Ethelred had married Emma the sister of one of them; she was the mother of Edward the Confessor; and when Ethelred died she became the wife of Canute.

Edward's plan, however, did not immediately succeed. Godwin and his son had a very strong party in the country; and on Edward's death, Harold was made king. But his reign was of no long continuance. William duke of Normandy soon appeared with an army, on the coast of Sussex, to assert his claim to the throne. Harold was confident that he should easily conquer William; and, in a contemptuous manner, offered him money to retire. *William* angrily rejected this; and in his turn

desired Harold to yield the kingdom up to him, or to fight him in a single combat; but Harold answered, that the God of armies would soon decide which of them should be king. So preparations were made; and the battle between Harold and William took place at Hastings, October 15th. 1066. It is a date that should be carefully remembered, as this is an important event and epoch in English history.

The night previous to the contest, the English, confident of victory, spent in feasting and merriment,—a sad way of preparing for a battle which would hurry so many immortal souls into another world, in the course of a few hours. The Normans acted differently. They passed the night in prayer; and though we may fear that there was more of form, than of real devotion among them, yet their conduct was at least far more proper and consistent at such a time, than the thoughtless behaviour of the English. The battle of Hastings was fought bravely on both sides, and for some time success was doubtful; but at last, an arrow from a Norman soldier struck Harold the English sovereign. He fell; and his death soon decided the victory for William, who was proclaimed king before the army left the field; and his success was celebrated by the Normans with *praise and thanksgiving to God who gave it.*



And now, before we go on to the reign of William the Conqueror, as he is called in history, let us pause a little, and look back upon the events of the previous ten or eleven centuries. We have seen our native land, during that period, conquered and possessed successively by four foreign nations ;—the Romans, the Saxons, the Danes, and lastly the Normans. Now though it may be somewhat humiliating to our national pride to reflect upon all these different conquests, yet we cannot do so without feeling the truth of what I have so often told you before ;—how wise and merciful the guidance of Providence has been, in the various changes which, from time to time, have taken place. You remember how much good followed the invasion of the Romans, in the introduction of Christianity through them. From the Saxons too, we had many wise and good laws ; and the fierce Danes gained benefit to themselves, if they conferred none upon us, by their union with people more civilized than they were, and by the opportunity that was given them of becoming acquainted with Christianity, and renouncing their former idolatry. No doubt we shall be able to discover some good result from the appearance of the Normans among us ; but before we take leave of the Saxons, *you may perhaps* like to know a little of the

state in which they were, when William first took possession of this country.

You remember that some excellent laws had been made during the reign of several of the Saxon kings, and particularly by Alfred ; and that they had been collected into one code by Edward the Confessor. There was also, at this period, an assembly in existence somewhat similar to our Parliament. It was called the Witenagemote, or assembly of wise men ; and consisted of representatives of different classes of the people, who met together for the purpose of forming laws, and regulating the affairs of the country ; but at this distance of time, it is difficult to ascertain exactly of whom the members of the Witenagemote consisted, and how they conducted their business. But while we are speaking of the laws, and the administration of justice in Saxon times, I must not forget to tell you of one most unjust and superstitious custom which was then common ; I mean the mode of deciding upon the guilt or innocence of a person, by what is called the ordeal. When any one was suspected of a crime, and it was difficult to ascertain whether or no he had committed it, the matter was sometimes referred to "the judgment of God." The unfortunate person was then subjected to a trial or proof, of which there were several different kinds. *He was to take up a red-hot iron in his hand ;*

or to thrust his arm into boiling water ; or to walk bare-foot over red-hot plough-shares. In all those cases, if he escaped unhurt, which was hardly possible, he was declared innocent : but, if not, guilty. Does not this remind you of some of the superstitions practised by the Druids with the rocking-stones ? It was sad to read of such things being done even in the days of the early Britons ; and far worse in those of the Saxons, who certainly had opportunities of knowing better. A little reflection even would have convinced them, that such a foolish and cruel mode of pretending to discover guilt and innocence, must be very displeasing to a God of truth and love.

As to learning, although Alfred had done much for the improvement of the people, by establishing colleges and schools, yet there was a great deal of ignorance among them still, and the Anglo-Saxons could not be considered yet as quite a civilized, far less a refined and educated people. Religion too was in a very low state. Christianity indeed was generally professed in the country ; but, as I told you before, error and superstition had made great progress since the time of the first converts, and the days of Amphibalus and Alban.

The language was still very different from *that which we speak* ; for it had not yet received the addition of a great many new words

from France, which were introduced by William and his Norman followers ; and which form a large portion of those belonging to the language which we use. Altogether, therefore, you see, there was much need of further improvement in every way ; but many a dark year of ignorance and superstition had yet to pass over England, ere she became the civilized, refined, educated, and Christian country, which she is in the happy days in which it is our privilege to live.

## XIV. FAMILY DISSENSIONS.

A.D. 1066—I100.

Instead of Edward's equal gentle laws,  
The furious victor's partial will prevail'd.  
All prostrate lay ; and in the secret shade,  
Deep-stung, but fearful, Indignation gnash'd  
His teeth. Of freedom—property—despoil'd,  
And of their bulwark-arms ;—with castles crush'd,  
With ruffians quarter'd o'er the bridled land ;  
The shivering wretches, at the curfew sound,  
Dejected, shrunk into their sordid beds,  
And, through the mournful gloom, of ancient times  
Mus'd sad, or dreamt of better. Ev'n to feed  
A tyrant's idle sport the peasant starv'd ;  
To the wild herd,—the pasture of the tame,  
The cheerful hamlet, spiry town, was given,  
And the brown forest roughen'd wide around.

THOMSON.

SUCH was the state of things in William the Conqueror's reign, according to the poet, and indeed his description of the country at that time was but too true. William was far from being beloved by his English subjects. You may imagine that they would not feel very *kindly disposed* towards a stranger who had *taken possession* of the throne upon a very

doubtful principle of right, and who, instead of trying to conciliate them, ruled with great severity, and introduced many novelties for which they were quite unprepared. One very unpopular thing which William did, was this ; —he brought a number of his Norman nobles or barons to this country, and placed them in situations of wealth and honour, while he treated the Saxon thanes quite as inferiors. And then he exercised a great deal of positive cruelty over his new subjects. In the beginning of his reign, there were some rebellions made against him, particularly in the North. These he put down by killing hundreds and thousands of the unfortunate inhabitants ; and though indeed this severity had the effect of making the people submit to his authority, yet it rendered him much disliked, as well as feared, by his new subjects.

William was a selfish man. One of his greatest enjoyments was hunting. Now there were plenty of large forests in the country in which he might have indulged himself in his favourite amusement, but these did not satisfy him ; so he had a new forest planted ; and in order to make it, many poor people were driven from their little properties ; and thus, to gratify himself, he made hundreds miserable. It is to this that the poet alludes, *when he speaks of " the peasant being starved*

to feed a tyrant's idle sport." The place where this forest was planted, still bears the name of the New Forest.

There was a law introduced by William, which I dare say you will think a very singular one. It was called the Feudal law. I will try to explain it to you. The lands and estates of the country were given, as I told you before, to William's nobles or barons; but these lands were held under certain conditions. The barons were to furnish the king with knights or soldiers; they were to go with him to war, and to assist him with their money and their arms. Then again, the barons gave portions of their land to others under them,—their vassals as they were called, who held these portions upon conditions similar to those upon which the barons held *their* lands; that is, they were required to furnish soldiers and arms to their lords, just as the lords themselves were required to furnish knights and money to the king. This is what is meant by the Feudal System.

But I have not yet done with all the new regulations brought in by William. Of course such a king could not expect to have the affection or confidence of his people. He ruled them by fear, not by love; and such a mode of governing is neither pleasant nor secure for *the sovereign* or the subjects;—for him who

rules, or for those who are ruled; and this William found. He was constantly fearing that his people would grow weary of submitting to his tyrannical authority, and that they would perhaps form conspiracies to put an end to his government altogether; and as such conspiracies are usually formed by night, he thought it would be for his safety to prevent any communications going on amongst the people at that time, by commanding them to put out their fire and candles early in the evening. So a bell was rung at eight o'clock every night to give notice of the hour; and then all the pleasant light and warm fires were extinguished, and the country was left in gloom, and darkness, and cold, and discomfort, till morning light once more dawned upon them. This bell was called the curfew, or *couvre feu*,—that is, “cover fire.” In some parts of England it is still sounded,—for old custom’s sake, not for the purpose for which it was rung in the Conqueror’s days. The poet Gray, you remember, alludes to it, when he says,

The curfew tolls the knell of parting day.

How different a winter’s evening in an English home must have been in those times from what it is now! *We* are accustomed to look forward to the long evening as that *pleasant part of the day* when all the family can



assemble, and talk together, and read together, and try to make one another happy, by the bright lamp-light and the blazing fire. Every English child knows the enjoyment of such an hour as this.

Now stir the fire, and close the shutters fast,  
Let fall the curtains, wheel the sofa round,  
And while the bubbling and loud hissing urn,  
Throws up a steaming column, and the cups  
That cheer but not inebriate, wait on each,  
So let us welcome peaceful evening in.

See what we owe to civilization, and to wise and good laws. And when we talk of the home comforts which we enjoy, let us never forget that we are especially indebted for them to the extension of true religion,—of real Christianity in the land. In most of the homes,—in *all* of the *happy* homes in our land,—we find on the table, or on the shelf, well preserved, and much loved and honoured, a certain book with which all the members of the family are acquainted ; which they are accustomed to read and to hear every day they live. Now it is that book which is the grand cause of all this domestic happiness ; it is the Bible which shows the way to be happy to every class in society, to the rich as well as to the poor ; *and families*, and members of families, fathers *and mothers*, and brothers and sisters, and

masters, and mistresses, are just happy in proportion to their love for that book, and to their attention to the rules of daily conduct which it contains.—But we must go on with the history.

One other act of William's I will tell you, and then we will talk a little of his family, as you may like to know something about *his* home. He compiled a book, which has been preserved to the present day, called Doomsday Book. It contains an account of all the different estates and lands in the kingdom at that time, with their value, and some other particulars about them. This, at least, was a useful thing to do, and it was one of the few acts of his reign which can be called useful.

William had three sons, Robert, William, and Henry. Robert, the eldest, was left to take charge of his father's possessions in Normandy when William became king of England; the other two succeeded in turn to the British throne. Now William was almost as harsh in the government of his family, as of his kingdom; and it happened that Robert was less favoured by him than either William or Henry, and therefore perhaps was more severely treated. Robert was high-spirited, and not at all disposed to submit to provocation; and this state of feeling between the father and son led to very sad and serious consequences. When *people are disposed to be angry, a little thing*

is often quite enough to bring about a quarrel. So it was with Robert, who felt jealous of his brothers, as well as revengeful towards his father. One day, when the royal party were all in Normandy, where William spent much of his time, the three young princes were amusing themselves together in the court of the palace; and in their sport, William and Henry threw some water over Robert their elder brother. This they did only in play, but Robert chose to take it in earnest. He became violently angry, drew his sword, and would have taken some revenge, had he not been prevented; and then he accused his father of favouring his brothers more than himself, and of supporting them against him. All this was very shocking; but something still worse followed. Robert actually made a rebellion against his father, and being encouraged by the king of France, he shut himself up in a castle in Normandy, and was there besieged by William. The father and son afterwards fought against one another in battle; but, as William's face was concealed by a helmet, Robert did not know at the time, that he was trying to kill his own father. At last a blow made William call for help; and then Robert knew his father's voice, and rebellious and disobedient as he was, he *felt, at that dreadful moment, really sorry for his wicked conduct.* He fell at William's feet.


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and begged for pardon, and promised to be obedient and submissive in future; but William was too angry to listen to him, or to say anything but harsh and passionate words. And so Robert was obliged to remain under his father's displeasure, and under the bitter reproaches of his own conscience, until the queen his mother, interceded on his behalf, and brought about a reconciliation. It would have been well had the family disputes ended here; but we shall soon see that they were not confined to the father and the eldest son; the brothers too quarrelled, and occasioned a great deal of misery to themselves and others in the two following reigns.

And now, as I have nothing further to say to you about William the Conqueror, let us pause here a moment, to find a lesson from the story I have just been telling you. And what shall the lesson be? We were speaking just now of the happiness and comfort of an English family, and of all the pleasures of a winter's evening in these days. But there is one thing most essential to the enjoyment of our fire-sides, and if *that* is wanting, the blazing hearth, and the warm curtains, and the comfortable sofa, and the bubbling urn, and even the prattle of the children,—will be of no avail at all to promote the happiness of the little circle. And what is this important ingredient

of happiness ? It is love,—family union and harmony. Love between parents and children, and brothers and sisters ; each trying to please the rest, and to be happy in making the others happy. Ah, it is often very different even now in English families which ought to be so loving and so peaceful. Disagreements, and angry words, and unkind actions, sadly spoil fire-side enjoyments ; and very often an evening begun happily closes in sorrow, just from some trifling dispute which a little self-control, a little exercise of forbearance, and a little Christian love, would have prevented or checked in the very beginning. Try then always to prevent a quarrel ; and as you see it frequently springs from some small cause, be particularly careful as to *little things*,—little unkindnesses, little acts of ill-temper, little provocations,—and if all these little things are avoided, there is not much danger of the family harmony being disturbed by great quarrels and disagreements.

On the death of the Conqueror, his son William Rufus succeeded to the throne. His elder brother had the first claim, but he as happened to be away at the time, fighting in a distant land, William took the opportunity of persuading the people to make him king *instead*. And he would gladly have seized upon *Normandy* too, but Robert returned to claim



that for himself ; and after some more disputing, the two brothers were reconciled ; and it was agreed between them that William should reign over England, and that Robert should keep undisturbed possession of Normandy ; and that when one of them died, the other should succeed to his territory.

But further quarrels arose between these unhappy brothers. You remember the youngest of them was named Henry. He now felt himself greatly injured, because, while Robert had Normandy, and William had England, he was left without any country to rule over. So he determined to shew his displeasure, and this he did in a very improper manner. The fortune of his mother Matilda had been left to him by his father ; and with this money he bought a strong fortified place called St. Michael's Mount, just off the coast of Normandy ; and from thence he made invasions into his brother's territory, and gave him a great deal of trouble and annoyance. Robert then asked William's assistance ; and they went together, and besieged Henry in his castle. During this siege, Henry and his soldiers suffered very much from want of water, and then Robert began to pity his suffering brother ; for passionate and self-willed as he was, he had some kind and generous feelings ; and he *allowed the besieged garrison to supply them-*

selves with water, and also sent a cask of wine for the relief of poor Henry. But even this act of kindness displeased William, and he reproached Robert for what he had done; but Robert replied "Ought we to let our brother die of thirst? If he die, how could we get another?"

Ah, if brothers, in their childish disputes and quarrels, were to remember these words, it might prevent many a harsh speech, many an unkind action. Do not forget this lesson from Robert of Normandy. If ever you are angry with a brother;—if you think he has injured you, and you feel revenge in your heart leading you to wish to injure him in return, just think of these words "If he dies, how shall I get another brother?" Death may come, and take that brother away, and then indeed you could quarrel with him no more; but how would you feel if, when looking upon his pale cheeks, and his stiff, motionless little body, lying in the coffin, you should remember your past disputes, all the unkind things you have done and said to him? would you not wish him back again? But it would be too late then; all the treasures of the world could not restore that little brother to you again! Oh then, love him, be kind to him now!

*Time passed on.* William did little or no-

thing to gain the affections of his subjects, and when death took him from them, he was as unregretted as his father had been before him. There was something remarkable both as to the place and manner of William's death. You remember the Conqueror's love of hunting, and how he deprived many poor people of their property, in order to make the New Forest for his own pleasure and diversion. His son, William Rufus, lost his life in the same amusement of which the father was so fond,—he was accidentally shot by a gentleman with whom he was hunting in that very forest! His brother Henry was with him when he fell: but instead of showing any particular sorrow for the death of William, his first thought was to induce the people to make him king at once, lest his elder brother Robert should come and assert *his* claim to the throne.

I will leave the history of Henry's reign for another chapter; and as we have had so much to learn already from the last two reigns, I think it will not be necessary for me to say much to you in conclusion in the way of lesson. The great importance of family love is what I have been particularly anxious to impress upon you to-day. And now I must remind you that love, like all other virtues, needs to be implanted in us, because it



does not, by nature, grow and flourish in our hearts. We are indeed, as the Bible tells us, far more prone, naturally, to hate than to love one another. We have seen sad proofs of this in our last stories. Seek then, from God Himself, to have the spirit of love bestowed upon you, and remember the great reason which is given us in scripture for the exercise of this grace,—“If God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.”

## XV. CIVIL COMMOTION.

A.D. 1100—1154.

The bark that held a prince went down,  
The sweeping waves roll'd on ;  
And what was England's glorious crown  
To him who wept a son ?  
He liv'd,—for life may long be borne  
Ere sorrow break its chain ;  
Why comes not death to those who mourn ?—  
He never smil'd again !  
There stood proud forms around his throne,  
The stately and the brave ;  
But which could fill the place of one,—  
That one beneath the wave ?  
Before him pass'd the young and fair,  
In pleasure's thoughtless train ;  
But waves dash'd o'er his son's bright hair,—  
He never smiled again !—*Mrs. HEMANS.*

ROBERT soon landed with an army to oppose Henry, and to assert his right to the throne ; but the two brothers were this time wise enough to listen to the advice of others, and to make an agreement, instead of fighting a battle. So they arranged, that Robert should give up his claim to England for a sum of *money to be paid to him by Henry every year,*

and that they would not again do anything to disturb one another in their respective dominions. Henry, however, very soon broke his part of the promise in the agreement. He determined to take possession of Normandy, notwithstanding what had just passed between himself and his brother. Robert was not a very wise governor ; and this, no doubt, was one reason why he was so often troubled by invasion from others. Henry was quite aware of his own superiority, and he took a most ungenerous and unkind advantage of it. Perhaps he still bore in mind the remembrance of all the past grievances he had received from his brothers ; and, if so, revenge, as well as ambition, might have led him to attack Normandy.

However it might have been, Henry conquered Robert in a battle at Trenchebury in Normandy, took him prisoner, brought him to England, put out his eyes, and shut him up in Cardiff Castle in Glamorganshire, for the remainder of his life, which was no less than twenty-seven years ! This is the last act, the sad termination of the quarrels of the unhappy sons of William the Conqueror.

We have traced the feeling of angry jealousy in them from their boyhood,—we have seen it growing stronger as they became men ; and showing itself in cruelty, and tyranny, and oppression, according to the power which each


had of exercising these bad passions. And now, when the father and one brother are laid in the grave, we find the two remaining brothers fighting on still, till, at last, one shows his superior strength of mind or body, not by displaying some feeling of generosity, not by determining to forgive and forget all past injury and unkindness,—not even by making one solitary conquest ;—no, more than this,—nothing will satisfy the cruel Henry, but actually keeping his poor brother a prisoner in his own power ;—shutting him up, without any hope of liberty, blind and helpless for life,—a long weary life, of twenty-seven years !

If in future years you should ever find yourselves beside the venerable ruins of Cardiff Castle, you will, I am sure, pause and think of the sad story connected with those walls. And learn from them the cruelty, as well as the general wickedness, of the human heart by nature, and the dreadful consequences of allowing angry feelings to grow up, and to grow strong within.

And now, can you expect a happy reign for Henry ? Though he had his own kingdom, and his brother's dominions also added to it, and though his own conscience had become so hardened as to feel no sorrow for his dreadful crime, no pity for the misery he had occasioned,—yet the time at last came, when he was made

to feel sorrow on his own account, and for his own loss,—sorrow so bitter, that the effect of it was, as you read in the mournful lines at the beginning of this chapter, that “he never smiled again.” The crime he had committed was chiefly in his own family;—the punishment he suffered was connected with his own family also,—it was the loss of his beloved, his only son.

This son was named William. He was quite young when the sad event happened to which these lines refer, and he had just accompanied his father to Normandy, in order that he might be acknowledged there as Duke, in the room of the poor imprisoned Robert. The ceremony took place, and Henry and his son prepared to return to England. They did not, however, sail in the same ship. Henry left Normandy first, and William was to follow immediately after in another vessel. The prince was accompanied by some young noblemen, his friends; and a gay, thoughtless, merry party they were when they entered the ship; William exulting in his new honours, with every prospect of life and happiness before him, and his friends rejoicing with him in his success. But a few short hours soon ended his bright prospects and his father’s happiness. The sailors, who had been drinking before they commenced the voyage, and were now partly intoxicated, were quite



unfit to guide the vessel; and through their mismanagement, it struck upon a rock, and was so much broken, that the passengers could not remain in it with safety. So a boat was brought to the side of the ship to receive them; the terrified passengers all leaped into it, in the hurry and confusion of the moment; the weight sunk the boat, and all, except one, perished! That one clung to a mast, and was taken up the next day by some fishermen. And then he went to England, and told there the sad news of the loss of the young prince, and of all his companions. Henry heard the dreadful intelligence; but still, for three days, he hoped, and hoped on; thinking that his son might possibly have escaped,—that he might perhaps have clung to a piece of the vessel, or have swum to some neighbouring rock, where he might be found, and rescued, and restored to him again. But days passed on, and no such news came to cheer the poor father. And then, at last, he gave up all hope, and sank down under his sorrow; all his joy in the world was gone for ever, and “he never smiled again!”

Ah, happy would it have been for Henry, even then, had that sad event,—that loss of all his earthly hopes,—led him to think, to repent, to seek for pardon where alone it can be found. Had he done this, though his

earthly happiness was at an end, he might still have looked forward to future happiness in another world, and to better possessions there. But we have no reason to believe that so it was; and thus the awful story remains on record, a solemn warning, telling us that God will see and punish sin, and that when all seems to be fair and prosperous, even then the blow may come, to strike down every prop, and to take away every hope from the poor deluded sinner.

And there is a special lesson in this story for *you*. It speaks to the young,—to those who are just beginning life, as prince William was, and who seem to have all bright and sunny before them, as he had when he set sail so gaily from the coast of Normandy. His sad tale seems to say to them, “In the midst of life we are in death.” *Your* sun may go down like *his*, while it is yet day;—and oh, how sad, if sudden death should find you, as it found him, thoughtless, unready, without any hope as to the future, any preparation for another, an eternal world!

Henry lived for fifteen long years after this sad event. Years of sorrow those were, even though he had so much about him which, under other circumstances, might have made him happy. In himself, he was talented and learned, so much so that he had acquired the

surname of Beau-clerc ; he had his possessions in peace ; and there was no further cause to fear they would be taken from him by his poor brother, for *he* had long been incapable of doing him any injury. But yet Henry lived on and on, melancholy, wretched, hopeless, both as to this world and the next ;—and at last, a short and sudden illness ended his life,—a long, sad, ill-spent life,—of sixty-seven years !

Henry I. had unjustly seized the crown which belonged to his elder brother Robert ; now, at his death, that same crown was taken by another usurper, instead of by the rightful heir, Henry's daughter Matilda. This usurper was Stephen, son of the Earl of Blois. He was a nephew of Henry, and a grandson of William the Conqueror. There was something so pleasing in the appearance and manners of Stephen, that the people of England were soon well-disposed towards him, and inclined to listen to the reasons he gave them for being made king. And after his coronation, he tried to please and win over the barons, by indulging them very much, and allowing them to build castles, and to put themselves in a state of defence. These barons were now becoming a very dangerous party in the country. They frequently took away the property of those *around them* ; and seized, and imprisoned in



their castles, travellers whom they supposed to possess money, in order that they might rob them. They were so strong and powerful that Stephen felt it would be dangerous to offend them; and therefore it was that he tried to gain them over to his side. But when he saw what a bad use they made of their castles and their strong-holds, he tried to restrain them a little; this they immediately resisted, and the consequence was, that civil war broke out, and continued through almost the whole of Stephen's reign.

Do you know what is meant by civil war? It means a war in which people of the same country take opposite sides, and fight one against the other—brother against brother, and neighbour against neighbour; and dreadful as all wars are, perhaps these are more dreadful than any, because, in them, we see people who ought to be living in love and harmony together, actually fighting, and seeking one another's destruction.

But the barons were not the only persons with whom Stephen had to contend. There was Matilda also,—the Empress Matilda she is usually called, because her first husband was emperor of Germany. She afterwards married Geoffrey Plantagenet, Earl of Anjou, and she had a little boy named Henry, of whom we shall soon hear a great deal. Matilda

da, of course, was unwilling to lose the throne which justly belonged to her ; and when she found that the country was in such a state of confusion from these contentions between Stephen and his barons, she thought it would be a good opportunity to try to bring these barons over to her side, and to endeavour to recover her rights ; so she came to England with an army, which was commanded by her brother Richard, earl of Gloucester.

And now poor England was in a sad state indeed ! Civil war, battles all over the land, rival parties, and the horrors which war brings with it on every side ! And all this for what ? For the possession of a throne which, in a very few years, could be neither Matilda's nor Stephen's any longer. Earthly honour, as you well know, can at best last but a very short time ; and it is often a cause of much trouble and vexation while it does last, as well as of many a hard struggle to obtain it at first. If people thought more of this, and especially if they knew the superior value of the glory of another world, we should not hear of so many wars and contentions. None would, like Stephen, unjustly seize the possessions of others ; and none would, like Matilda, have to fight and struggle for their lawful rights ; and then the world would be peaceful and happy indeed.

In these civil wars, sometimes Stephen, and

sometimes Matilda was successful; each had a party; and now one, and now the other seemed likely to gain the victory. At one time the Empress actually took Stephen prisoner. He was in confinement for six weeks, and during that time Matilda was acknowledged as queen. After this, Stephen's party again had the upper hand; he was then released, and restored to his throne; and so they went on for almost twenty years, till they, and the soldiers, and the barons, and the people, were all quite weary of civil wars. At last, Stephen and Matilda wisely determined to put an end to their disputes by making an agreement. This agreement was that Stephen should possess the crown during his life, and that then it should pass to young Henry, the son of Matilda. So the matter was settled; and Matilda retired, and Stephen reigned in peace. You may wonder why they did not come to this conclusion many years before. The fact was that Stephen had all along hoped to secure the kingdom at his death for his son Eustace. But the death of Eustace disappointed this hope, and then he became willing to allow the crown to go to young Henry.

There is nothing more, I think, to interest you in Stephen's reign, and so we will now pass on to that of Henry the second, the first of the house of Plantagenet or Anjou.

I should tell you that this sur-name had its origin in the custom of wearing a sprig of *planta genista*, or Spanish broom, in the helmet; and the name was transferred from father to son in that family for many generations. As however this reign is a long one, I will reserve it for our next chapter, and close this by reminding you how thankful we should be for the blessings of peace and quietness which we enjoy, in our country, in the days in which we live; and how earnestly we should pray that it may please God still to continue these mercies to us, and to preserve us from war, and all its sad consequences.

## XVI. INGRATITUDE AND DISOBEDI- ENCE.

A.D. 1154—1189.

Blow, blow, thou winter wind,  
Thou art not so unkind  
As man's ingratitude;  
Thy tooth is not so keen,  
Because thou art not seen,  
Although thy breath be rude.

Freeze, freeze, thou bitter sky,  
Thou dost not bite so nigh,  
As benefits forgot;  
Though thou the waters warp,  
Thy sting is not so sharp,  
As friends remember'd not.—SHAKESPEARE.

HENRY II. was, perhaps, altogether, the best king who had for many years ruled over England. One of the first things he did was to destroy the castles of the barons, which Stephen had allowed them to build, and which had become such an occasion of mischief in the country. And this and other acts he performed with so much prudence and wisdom, that the people submitted to him far more

willingly than they had done to the Norman kings who preceded him. And it is well here to remember, that success in most matters, as well as in governing, depends very greatly upon this quality of which Henry possessed so much,—I mean prudence. There are many persons of good principle and good intentions, who yet almost always fail in their plans, just because they are deficient in this one thing. They set about their projects without due consideration, and they carry them on rashly and precipitately, not thinking of future consequences, nor of the result of certain actions, but quite taken up with the design of the present moment ; and so that design is frequently not effected at all, or else it is found soon to fail and come to nothing. The first lesson then, that you have to learn from this king, is prudence in action ; forethought and consideration in commencing an undertaking, as well as ardour and perseverance in carrying it out.

But you must not suppose that Henry was *always* wise and prudent in what he did, though this was his general character. He had many faults and weaknesses, as we shall soon see.—In the last reign you heard that the *barons* had obtained undue power in England ; in the present, we shall find that too much power had been claimed by the *clergy*. I have frequently told you, that, through all

these years which we have passed over in the course of our history from the time of the Saxons, religion was in a very low and debased state. It was the mere form and name of Christianity, mingled with much superstition and error, both as to doctrine and practice. And the very ministers of religion, who ought to have led the people in what was right, set them sad examples by their own conduct. But such was the power and independence of the law, which they had acquired, that, whatever crimes they committed, no penalty was imposed upon them ; and in their effort to obtain all this power and independence, they were supported by the Bishop of Rome, who was called the Pope, and who claimed supreme authority as head of the church.

There lived in this reign, a very remarkable person named Thomas à Becket. He was a man of great talent, and for that, as well as on other accounts, he became a favourite with the king, and was raised by him from one post of dignity to another. First, he was made chancellor, and afterwards bishop of Canterbury. For a long time, the king and Becket were on most intimate and familiar terms, as you will think from a droll story I am going to tell you about them. One cold day, when they were riding out together, they saw a poor beggar covered with rags. Henry

pointed him out to Becket, and asked, if it would not be a charitable act to give a garment to that poor man. "Certainly it would," answered Becket, "and you do well, Sir, to think of such good actions." "He shall have one then presently," said the king playfully, and immediately he began to pull the skirt of the chancellor's coat, which was scarlet, and lined with ermine. Becket resisted, for he was not inclined to lose his coat in this way ; and then the king pulled more and more violently, so that both he and the chancellor were nearly dragged from their horses in the struggle. Henry proved the stronger; he got possession of the coat, and bestowed it on the beggar, who was, as you may suppose, very much astonished, not knowing to whom he was indebted, for such an extraordinary gift. It may surprise us in our modern days, to read of scenes like these; but we must remember that manners and customs were very different seven hundred years ago, from what they are at present.

While Becket was chancellor, he lived in great style and magnificence for those times ; but as soon as he became archbishop, he changed his habits entirely. He wore not only coarse, but dirty clothes ; and sack-cloth next his skin ; his food was of the plainest kind, and the water he drank he made



bitter by the nauseous herbs he mingled with it. Then besides this, he practised penances and self-mortification. Every day he washed, on his knees, the feet of thirteen beggars; and many other things he did which were equally strange and foolish. And what, do you suppose, was his motive? We cannot think that it was to set an example of humility; if it had been, this was a sadly mistaken mode of either teaching or practising such a virtue. But there is not much reason to think that Becket knew a great deal about humility. We know it is quite possible for a very proud heart to be concealed under very humble clothing and manners; such seems to have been the case with Becket. He practised all this austerity to make people believe that he was a very holy man,—a saint,—as indeed he was afterwards called, and to win the favour of the Pope.

Meantime, however, the undue power of which, as I told you, the clergy had become possessed, gave Henry some uneasiness; and he determined, if possible, to restrain it. So he collected and drew up a number of rules and regulations, which were afterwards called the *Constitutions of Clarendon*, because it was at Clarendon, near Salisbury, that these rules were drawn up, in an assembly composed of the bishops, the barons, and Henry

himself. The object of these constitutions, was to restrain the power of the clergy within due bounds ; and the bishops were required to give their seal and promise, that they would adhere to them. Becket was the only one who hesitated to obey ; and though at last he was prevailed upon, with some difficulty, to do what was required, yet, soon after, with the Pope's leave, he recanted, and actually inflicted penance on himself, for having promised to observe the constitutions of Clarendon at all. This, of course, displeased the king ; and now a quarrel began between him and Becket, which continued for a long time. The archbishop left the country, went over to the Pope, and did all he could to stir up a party against his king at home, and to encourage the clergy to rebel, and resist the regulations which had just been made. In all this he was encouraged both by the king of France, and by the Pope ; so that the matter became increasingly difficult and perplexing to Henry.

After some time, a reconciliation was effected, and Becket returned, and was half restored to favour ; but this did not last long. Indeed both parties were to blame ; Becket for his rebellion and insubordination ; and Henry for allowing his angry feelings and passions so far to get the better of him, that he punished Becket unjustly, and for crimes of which,

badly as he had behaved, he was not really guilty.

At last this long quarrel terminated in a dreadful manner. Henry was one day heard to say, that he wished his friends would rid him of this troublesome insolent priest, for there could be no peace as long as he remained. Some of the barons who were standing by, and who had long hated Becket, heard these words of the king with wicked pleasure, and determined to act upon them without any further commands. They actually resolved to go at once, and either put an end to the life of Becket, or bring him as a prisoner to the king. Four of them therefore set off immediately for Canterbury. When they arrived, they asked for the archbishop. It was the hour for prayers, and he was in the cathedral ; so the barons followed him there. Becket soon guessed from the looks and manners of his enemies, what their intended errand was ; he saw death before him, and prepared to meet it with fortitude and calmness : for with all his faults, there was no mean fear, no cowardice in Becket. He refused to leave the church, saying that, if he must die, he would die at his post : and then he placed himself against one of the pillars, there to ward off, or to receive the blows of his enemies. He defended himself as well as he could for a little while, but soon he was

over-powered by his four murderers. He fell, and they all rushed to take part in the cruel deed. One stabbed him, and others cleft his skull, and scattered his brains upon the pavement of the church. And so ended the life of Thomas à Becket !

But how did Henry feel, when he heard of the death of his poor fallen enemy,—once his constant companion and friend ? He felt grieved and vexed ; grieved that Becket had been actually put to death, for *that* he had never intended ; and vexed with himself for having spoken with so much haste and passion. A hasty temper, and an ungoverned tongue, had betrayed this usually wise and just king into a rash expression which occasioned him a great deal of fruitless sorrow afterwards. And here you have another and a very different lesson to learn from Henry,—the importance of restraining hasty passionate words. Our previous stories have told us of the awful consequences of revengeful feelings, long and secretly cherished in the heart, and then, at last, venting themselves in some act of cruel vengeance. Passion is different from this. It is a sudden feeling of the mind, soon kindled, and perhaps soon extinguished ; but its effects are often quite as dangerous as those of malice and revenge. Passion has occasioned many a murder, which no after sorrow or remorse

could atone for. Oh then, be on your guard against passion, and never excuse yourselves when you have given way to it, by saying or thinking that it was only a momentary feeling ; that you intended no harm ; and that the anger was gone almost as soon as the words were uttered. Remember, the *effects* of passion may last long after the passion itself has passed away ; and it would be poor consolation indeed for you to reflect, as you looked upon the consequences of your angry words, that the passion was momentary, and that you meant no harm.

Becket's murder displeased the Pope exceedingly ; those at home too, who had favoured the archbishop, and belonged to his party, were angry and grieved at the deed that had been committed. Becket was now called a saint and a martyr ; miracles were said to be performed at his tomb ; and such was the foolish superstition that prevailed then, that sick and diseased persons actually made long pilgrimages to Canterbury, that they might obtain a cure at Becket's shrine ! As to Henry himself, in order to gain pardon for this act of which he had been the originating cause, he was obliged to confess his crime, and make great concessions to the Pope ; and sometime after, he performed voluntary penance at the tomb of the murdered archbishop.

And now we must leave Becket and his melancholy history. I need hardly point out to you the particular points of his character. Some of these were good:—his ability and firmness of purpose, and courage, and even his independence, under proper control, might have made him a valuable man, and a useful minister to his sovereign. But, unhappily, all these good qualities were spoilt by other and very bad parts of his character which he never tried to subdue. There was pride, and vanity, which led to hypocrisy, and to a show of humility which he did not really possess; and there was insubordination, and obstinate resistance to proper authority; and all these things occasioned, as we have just seen, a great deal of trouble and vexation to Henry, and indeed to the kingdom in general. When we think of Becket therefore, we must blame as well as pity him.

There was another important event, which took place in the reign of Henry II., and this was the conquest of Ireland. We have not yet said much about this island, which is now so closely connected with our own country,—under the same sovereign, and government, and laws. At the time of which we are now speaking, Ireland was divided, as England had once been, into several distinct kingdoms; and a quarrel amongst the rulers induced Dermot

king of Leinster to ask aid from Henry. So an army was sent, and Henry himself went over. The native princes soon submitted to him, and Ireland became, from that time, a part of the dominions of the kings of England, though it occasioned them a great deal of trouble and fighting in subsequent years. Now I must not forget to tell you, that this conquest of Ireland was undertaken with the sanction and approval of the Pope, who indeed encouraged Henry, and urged him on to add this island to his own dominions. And why was the Pope so desirous that Henry should possess Ireland? I will tell you. Though Ireland was at that time sunk into a state of great ignorance and barbarism, yet it had not altogether lost the knowledge of Christianity, which it had received many ages before; though that Christianity was becoming mixed with the errors of Popery, which, as you have seen, had now extended so widely over England.

About the time of the Saxon invasion, the gospel had been first preached in Ireland by a good man named Patrick, and many of the ignorant natives had been brought from heathenism, and had become true converts to Christianity. When Augustine and the other Romish missionaries came to England, they did not extend their labours to Ireland; and

when the English became subject to the Pope, the Irish still continued free and independent of his authority ; and so they remained until the time of this conquest by Henry II. Now the Pope's great wish was to have Ireland under his control as well as England ; and it was upon condition that Henry would gain over the country to the Romish church, that he gave his permission and sanction to the enterprise. Henry acted in obedience to the Pope's command ; and so the poor conquered Irish were thenceforth instructed, if indeed they were instructed at all, not in the pure doctrines of the Bible, but in the errors and superstitions of popery.

I told you that the government of Ireland gave much trouble to the English for many, many long years ; and we cannot wonder at this ; for how could it be expected that God's blessing should rest upon an undertaking commenced with such views, and carried on upon such principles as was this conquest with Ireland ? And we who live in the present day, should not forget the injury which the sister country received through England, not only at the conquest, but long afterwards too ; and while we rejoice that efforts are now making to deliver her from the bondage of ignorance and error in which she had so many ages remained, let us do all we can to assist these



efforts, that so, by God's blessing upon them, Ireland may become again what she was once called in her early happy days,—the land of saints.

And now, before we close the long and important reign of Henry II. I will tell you something about his domestic,—his family history. And sad indeed the account must be;—quite as sad as that of the family of William the Conqueror; and in many respects, very much like it. Henry had several sons; Henry, Richard, Geoffrey, and John; and these sons he seems to have treated with kindness and affection;—perhaps indeed with too much indulgence, and so his fault was the reverse of that of William the Conqueror, who, you remember, was generally harsh and severe in his family. Now, over-indulgence is no real kindness to children, as we shall see from the story of Henry's sons. The eldest, Henry, was a high-spirited, ambitious boy; and perhaps, had he been early trained in obedience and self-restraint, he might have become a good and useful king. But his father, willing to gratify the young prince in his love of power and honour, actually permitted him to be crowned during his own life; and this was a thing which it was wrong in the son to wish, and foolish in the father to grant. The consequences were very different from what Henry

had expected. As soon as the young prince was crowned, instead of being contented with such a mark of affection on his father's part, he became still more desirous of power, and wished to have the dominion and authority, as well as the title of king; and because every thing was not arranged according to his own will, he actually rebelled against his father, and persuaded his brothers to rebel too! And the worst part of this story is, that their mother, Queen Eleanor, encouraged these young princes in their acts of disobedience. Eleanor was a bad wife, and a bad mother; and if you remember what I once said to you about the effect of a mother's instruction, and how much of the children's future character depends upon her training, you will, no doubt, feel pity for Henry's family, who had so many disadvantages in their early years. We may pity them indeed; but, at the same time, we must not excuse their conduct. They knew full well that rebellion against their father was a dreadful crime; and the hour came, when some of them repented bitterly of that crime; but it was too late then for them to become obedient and docile children.

After a long course of rebellion, in which he was encouraged and assisted by the French king, young Henry was actually preparing to make an attack upon his father, when he

was seized with a sudden illness. He was soon told that that illness would shortly end in death ; and then, in deep sorrow and remorse, the dying prince sent for his father, intreating him to come without delay, and to pardon his past undutiful behaviour. Henry was at no great distance ; and yet he came not, nor heeded his son's message. Not that he would have been unwilling to forgive had he been assured of the prince's real penitence, and also of his actually dying state ; but young Henry had so often before professed sorrow which his after conduct proved to be insincere, that his father suspected his sincerity now ; and actually believed that his son was feigning illness, in order to get him into his power ; and so he feared to trust himself with him ! What a thought for a father to have respecting his child ! But young Henry had brought all this upon himself ; it was the just, though severe punishment of his own disobedience ; and as he lay on his dying bed, longing for his father's forgiveness, and assured that he would never have it,—oh, how bitterly did he repent, and what would he then have given for a few more years, or even months, of life, that he might shew, by his future conduct, that his repentance now was really sincere. But no ; that could not be. Death came, and young Henry passed away into an eternal world.

His father, when he heard the sad intelligence, grieved indeed that he had not hastened at once to pardon his poor son, and to comfort him in his last hours ;—but it was too late to comfort or to pardon him now,—that son was gone !

Ah ! if any disobedient children had stood by Henry's dying bed at his last moments, and heard his words of remorse for his past conduct ; or if they could have seen the tears of the father when he was told that his rebellious son was dead,—do you not think they would have felt as they never had felt before ? And would they not have resolved never, never again so to displease a parent, and to lay up such sorrows for a dying hour ? And yet the sad warning was quite lost upon young Henry's brothers. Wicked as they had been before, they became still more wicked now. Each claimed a share of his father's dominions, and no concession, no promise that Henry made was sufficient to satisfy them ; and so rebellion broke out afresh, and the poor king was obliged to take up arms against his own children !

Not long after Prince Henry's death, his younger brother Geoffrey died, leaving behind him a little boy named Arthur, of whom you will hear more in a future reign. Only Richard, and John who was very young, were then remaining of Henry's sons. At last an accommodation was determined upon. The

king made many promises to Richard, the son who was now carrying on the contest aided by the king of France ; and he engaged, amongst other things, to pardon all those persons who had been concerned in past acts of rebellion. A list of these persons was given to him, that he might bestow forgiveness accordingly ; but what was his grief and dismay to find, at the head of that list, the name of John, his youngest and favourite son ! The child whom he had fondly hoped would grow up good and obedient, and be the stay and comfort of his old age,—even he had rebelled, and turned against him ! And indeed John's future life shewed that of all the sons of Henry, he was the worst ;—the most wicked, and the most cruel.

This last blow was too much for poor Henry to bear. He sank under it, and was shortly after seized with a fever, occasioned by distress of mind, of which he died after a long reign of thirty-five years. His children thus became his murderers, and he breathed his last, lamenting that he had ever been born, or that he had ever become the father of such disobedient and undutiful children.

And now let us end this chapter with two or three words in the way of instruction from this melancholy story. It speaks particularly to children, and it tells them to beware of disobedience to the parents whom God has set

over them. You remember, I am sure, the blessing promised to obedient children in the commandment which says, "Honour thy father and thy mother." That is called "the first commandment with promise;" and the promise is, "It shall be well with thee, and thou shalt live long on the earth." Now if this blessing belongs to dutiful and obedient children, it is also equally true that a fearful curse belongs to those who are undutiful and disobedient children. I might tell you many verses of the Bible which show us this; but as we are just now talking about *history*, I will give you some instances to prove the truth of what I have just said from *that* instead. It is remarkable, that the disobedient sons of Henry II. either died in early life, or were cut off suddenly in middle age, or ended their days in sorrow and distress, and died unhonoured and unregretted. Now I do not mean you to understand from this, that long life and prosperity are always signs of God's blessing; nor, on the contrary, that early death and much sorrow, are always signs of His displeasure; for it is *not* so. But what I wish you to understand and to remember is this:—that disobedience to parents is one of those sins which God very frequently punishes openly in this world, as if to tell children, in a way which they cannot misunderstand, how very

angry that sin makes Him, and how awful the judgments are which it calls down upon those who commit it. Oh then, with better guidance, and under far better instruction than ever Henry's unhappy family received, try to act so to *your* parents, that you may be their joy now, and inherit their blessing hereafter; and never occasion them to say in the bitterness of their heart, through your undutiful conduct,—

How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is  
To have a thankless child!

## XVII. THE LION-HEARTED KING.

A.D. 1189—1199.

Brave Saladin, that was the Sultan great  
Of Babylon, when death did him arrest,  
His subjects charg'd, when he should leave his seat,  
And life resign, to time and nature's hest,—  
They should prepare his shroud upon a spear,  
And all about the same forthwith should bear  
Though Ascalon, the place where he deceas'd,  
With trumpet-sound, and herald to declare  
These words aloud,—'The king of all the East,  
Great Saladin, behold is stripped bare,  
Of kingdoms large, and lies in house of clay,  
And this is all he bare with him away.—WITNEY.

HENRY II. was succeeded by his son Richard, who bore the sur-name of Cœur de Lion, on account of his great bravery. Richard had, you remember, carried on rebellion against his father to the last ; and now he was called to the throne by that very death of which he himself had been the chief cause. When he gazed upon the lifeless countenance of his poor father, and followed his body to the tomb, Richard felt all that remorse of conscience, all



that bitter repentance for his past mis-conduct, which his brother Henry had felt before him. But there was this difference ;—both indeed repented in vain, as far as obtaining the pardon of their offended father was concerned ;—but while Henry was taken away, and had no opportunity of proving his sincerity by future reformation, Richard was permitted to live many years, and to show by his conduct that his father's unhappy death had taught him a lesson which he could never, never forget. It is well indeed to be brought to repent of sin at any time, and under any circumstances,—but to have offended one whom we should have honoured and loved, and to be convinced of our guilt when it is too late to make any reparation, oh, that is a sad thought indeed ; and it must have been a part of the just punishment which Richard suffered for his past undutiful behaviour, to carry that thought about with him even to the last day of his life.


Richard commenced his reign by giving up all connection with those who had been the assistants of his former crimes. This was a good beginning ; it was a right and a wise thing to do. Bad example and influence have a powerful effect for evil ; and those unworthy associates might have again led Richard, not indeed into the same crimes which he had committed before, but into others as fearful in

their consequences as they had been. It was far better therefore to give up his old companions altogether, and to choose friends of a different character, who would advise him rightly and well.

A great part of Richard's reign was spent in Palestine, fighting in the Crusades or Holy Wars. These wars had been going on for many years, but I did not mention them before, because they have not hitherto been immediately connected with our history. They were undertaken by the Christian kings, princes, nobles, and others, against the Mahometan possessors of the Holy Land, for the purpose of rescuing Palestine, and the city of Jerusalem in particular, from the hands of the Saracen conquerors. Now there was certainly a great deal of ardour of feeling, and courage, and generosity, shown by those who went to these wars, and fought so bravely in them. It was no uncommon thing in those days for princes to part with their dominions, and nobles with their estates, and to give up or risk all they had, even life itself, in order that they might take part in this holy enterprize, for such they conceived it to be. They considered themselves as the soldiers of Christ, and each bore the representation of the cross upon his shoulder and upon his shield, as the emblem of the mission in which he was enga-

ged. It was from this circumstance that these wars had the name of *crusades*.

Now in all this there was mingled much superstition, which was, you know, the great characteristic of the religion of that age. I do not mean to say, that it is not quite right and proper to reverence the spot on which our Lord lived when on earth. We may well love the land in which he dwelt, and cherish a hallowed recollection of the city where he died, and the place where his body lay after his crucifixion ; and if we were to visit that land, no doubt we should feel very strongly all those sacred associations which are connected with so many spots in Palestine, and feel as if we were indeed standing upon holy ground. And then, if our feelings were rightly directed, we should do something more than this ; we should remember with gratitude why it was that all those wonderful events happened, and be led to look up from the scene of Christ's sufferings, to the bright world where he is now in glory, and from whence he will come to judge the quick and the dead ; and we should seek to be accepted of him in that day. These are the feelings which a Christian ought to have in visiting the Holy Land ; but I am afraid they were not such as influenced the minds of the crusaders of whom we were speaking. Some of



them indeed, particularly those who at first commenced the enterprize, were men of religious feeling, but then there was much ignorance and superstition, as I said before, mingled with that feeling. Their reverence for sacred spots was connected with the notion that there was some merit attached to their zeal in defending them; and that those who fought and who died in so holy an undertaking would assuredly inherit a crown of immortality. And then, in after times, when the first burst of enthusiasm had passed away, these crusades became, in their spirit, very much like other wars, and were quite as much distinguished for cruelty and bloodshed, as if they had been undertaken for any common cause. Hatred of their enemies, jealousies among themselves, and many other wrong feelings, filled the hearts of those who were the professed champions of the cross, and who gloried in the thought that they were fighting under the banner of Christ himself.

Ah, how thankful we should be, who live in the brighter days of gospel truth, for the superior knowledge which *we* possess. But yet we may learn a lesson even from these crusaders,—a lesson of zeal and courage to be expended in a better cause than theirs. We too have a battle to fight; a holy war to engage in; and all are called upon to undertake

it. Even children have been already marshalled under the banner of the cross, and have engaged to fight under that banner until their lives' end. You know what I mean. The contest we are engaged in is against sin, and the evil of the world; enemies far stronger than the Turks and Saracens of old. But then, if we fight aright, we are sure of victory, which the crusaders, brave as they were, never could be; and far higher glory is reserved for the Christian conqueror than ever awaited the successful combatants in the Holy Wars.

But it is time that I should tell you something of what happened to Richard when he went to Palestine, and fought in the Holy War. His opponent there, the head of the Saracens at that time, was a man very much like Richard himself; for he was warlike, brave, and generous: his name was Saladin. Richard distinguished himself by his bravery during his exploits in Palestine; but he showed while engaged in them, a quality far better even than that of courage, and one for which he was remarkable in other instances,—kindness and generosity to his enemies. It so happened that Saladin, during the war, was seized with a dangerous illness, and for some time his life was despaired of. Now, to many minds, this would have been a matter of great rejoicing and exultation; but it was not so to Richa-

He grieved over and pitied Saladin's sufferings ; sent him kind messages ; visited him in his tent ; supplied him with cool fresh fruit when he required it ; and did all in his power to save his life, and contribute to his recovery. I am sure you will admire Richard as much for his noble disinterestedness, as you will for his courage. Do not forget to *imitate* as well as to *admire*.

There were some things, however, connected with this crusade which were vexatious and annoying to Richard, notwithstanding all the renown he acquired. I should have told you, that he was joined in the expedition by Philip king of France ; a king in some respects worthy of being united with so great a warrior as the English sovereign ; but Philip was not possessed of that kind of noble generosity of which we were just now speaking. He showed this by giving way to jealousy, because Richard was, on account of his valour, appointed chief in command ; and he treated him as a rival, rather than a friend and companion in war. Such jealousies are indeed too common in the world ; and the reason is, that we are all so fond of being first, and of having more power and authority than our neighbours ; and we have great need to watch over our own spirits, lest this feeling of envy and jealousy should get the better of us, as it did of Philip. If we

were accustomed to think humbly of ourselves, and to look always upon the great and good qualities of others, and not upon their weaknesses and failings, we should be less likely to fall into this mean and unamiable fault ; and then we should often find, that our right place is a low, and not a high one : and be more disposed to admit the superiority of our neighbours, than to claim the first honours for ourselves.

At last Philip was so much displeased with the ascendancy of Richard, that he returned to France, leaving, however, ten thousand troops to assist in the wars. And Philip was not the only one of the crusaders who began to grow weary, and to wish to go back to Europe, and their quiet homes. Sickness, and want, and fatigue, took away a great deal of their first ardour ; and though Richard himself would have gladly remained to fight and conquer, he was obliged to yield to the desires of the soldiers and commanders. So a truce was concluded between Saladin and the crusaders, in which it was agreed, that several sea-port towns which had been taken, should remain in the hands of the Christians ; and that they should be at liberty to perform pilgrimages to Jerusalem unmolested. But though that city was almost within sight, Richard was disappointed in his hope of besieging and taking it. Saladin

did not live long after making this truce. He died at Damascus ; and just before he expired, he ordered his winding-sheet to be carried through the city, while a crier proclaimed with a loud voice,—“ This is all that remains to the mighty Saladin, the Conqueror of the East.” By his last will, he ordered large sums of money to be distributed among the poor,—whether Jews, Christians, or Mahometans.

So died the generous and noble Saladin. We cannot help lamenting, that the good qualities he possessed were never brought under the pure influence of Christian and religious principle. Saladin was, you remember, a Mahometan ; he was a follower of the false prophet, who taught that there was one God, and that Christ was not the Son of God, but a prophet only, greater indeed than Moses, but not so great as Mahomet himself. These and other false doctrines and absurd fables, were written in a book called the Koran, which Mahomet gave to his disciples, commanding them to spread this corrupt faith through the world, by the force of the sword, and promising them a future life of pleasure and carnal enjoyment in another world, as their final reward. Ah, how different all this is from the peaceful spirit of Christianity, and from the manner in which Christ commanded *his* disciples to diffuse the knowledge of the Gospel among mankind !



Richard, on his return from the Holy Land, met with other and greater vexations than he had yet endured. He was shipwrecked on the coast of Istria, and then had to pursue his journey, disguised as a pilgrim, through the dominions of Leopold Duke of Austria ; for Leopold had become his enemy in consequence of a quarrel which had taken place between them during the crusade. Richard's precautions however were of no use ; he was discovered, and taken prisoner ; carried to a distant castle, and shut up there from his country and his friends.

Poor Richard ! what a sad termination to his exploits in the Holy Land ! But happily, he was not left to linger out the remainder of his days in that dismal castle, as Robert of Normandy had done in the Castle of Cardiff. The time came for his deliverance, and a most remarkable deliverance it was.

A young French minstrel-boy, it is said, named Blondel, who had followed Richard in his expeditions, and owed every thing to him, pitied and loved his master with all his heart ; and he determined to find out the place where he was in captivity, though he should travel half over the world in search of it. So he began his long journey, and wandered on day after day, with little food, and little rest. Sometimes he passed through cities, sometimes

he found himself in wild plains, and sometimes in deep woods ; and wherever he went, he enquired whether any thing was known of the royal prisoner. For a long time all was in vain ; no intelligence could be given ; yet still he persevered. At last he was told, that there was, at the entrance of a certain forest not very far from Vienna, an ancient castle, and in that castle, it was said, a prisoner was kept, closely watched and guarded, but no one knew who he was, or whence he came. A ray of hope darted into Blondel's mind when he heard all this. He lost not a moment, but hastened on his way till he came to the borders of the forest. At last he reached a castle. It was a dismal place indeed. Dark and gloomy, and strongly secured on every side. The light of day seemed as if it could scarcely penetrate into the dismal abode ; but there was one little window, high up in the wall, closely barred and grated ; and Blondel was told, by a wandering peasant whom he met in the forest, that sometimes the figure of the poor prisoner might be seen at that little aperture, trying to catch a ray of glimmering light, or a breath of fresh air to cheer and revive him. Blondel now had no doubt that the prisoner was indeed his beloved master ; but how could he find him out, or speak to him ? for the window was much too high for

him to reach,—what *could* he do? Blondel was not discouraged, he had succeeded so far, and he would not sink into despair now. He soon thought of a project by which he might ascertain whether Richard were really there. He remembered that there was a favourite song which had been composed partly by the king, and partly by Blondel himself; he thought he would play and sing this song, in the hope that Richard would hear and recognize it, and give some proof that he did so. So Blondel began to sing, and when he had ended the first verse, to his great joy, he heard, faintly indeed, a voice singing within the castle. It was his master's voice; the young minstrel felt sure it was; and as he listened, he could distinguish the very words of the song answering him, just as Richard had been accustomed to sing them with Blondel in former happy days. No further proof was needed now. It was quite certain that that castle contained no less a prisoner than the king of England! But then, how was he to be set free? Blondel himself could not obtain pardon from the proud Duke of Austria, and prevail upon him to give Richard his liberty. But the minstrel did all that affection and perseverance in his master's cause could do. He gave information to the nobles of England; he told them where their king was; and how he had found him out; and

then a large sum of money was offered to Leopold for the prisoner's ransom, and the captive king was released, and carried once more to his country, and to his affectionate subjects. Can you not imagine what a happy restoration this was; and how Richard must have loved and thanked his faithful minstrel boy?

And does not this remarkable story show us what a noble quality is that of affectionate gratitude? for it was that, you know, which led young Blondel to risk his life, and to elevate his energies to the almost hopeless task of finding out and rescuing his beloved master. When love and gratitude fill the heart, it is astonishing how even the youngest and the meanest can discover some way of being useful to those whom they love and venerate; and how sometimes they may really render them an important service. I dare say you remember the old fable of the lion and the mouse;—this story of Blondel is just an illustration of the lesson which that fable was intended to teach. The lion, you remember, had conferred some benefit upon the mouse, and the little animal was from that time all anxiety to show her gratitude. But how could a poor little weak mouse do any thing for a great lion,—the king of the forest? It seemed quite presumptuous to entertain such an idea; and the mouse was

ready almost to despair of ever being able to prove to him how thankful she felt. But one day, you recollect, it so happened that this same noble lion was snared, and taken in a net, and there he lay helpless and hopeless, very much like *Cœur de Lion* in the old German castle. And then was the time for the little mouse, like *Blondel*, to show her love and gratitude by rendering a real benefit to the noble prisoner. Weak as she was, she could do something which the great lion, with all his strength, could not do;—she could gnaw asunder, with her sharp teeth, the meshes of the net; and if she did but persevere, she could make a hole large enough for the lion to escape by. And so she did. She patiently laboured on and on, day after day, just as *Blondel* wandered on and on in his tedious journey; but neither laboured in vain;—the lion, so says the fable, was set free by the persevering efforts of the little mouse; and the king, according to our story, was liberated through the disinterested affection of his young minstrel boy. Imitate them, then, in their gratitude, and in their patience; and never think that you are too young, too weak, too insignificant, to be useful to those you love, however much greater they may be than yourselves, if you do but watch for an opportunity

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of showing your gratitude ; and then carry out your efforts with steady perseverance.

England had fared badly during all these years. The ill-disposed had taken advantage of Richard's absence, and rebellions and insubordination had been the result. Amongst other troublesome people at that time, there was one celebrated character called Robin Hood, an outlaw, who lived chiefly in the forests and wild parts of the country, supporting himself and his party by robbery and pillage. Two other men, also celebrated for their wild and mischievous conduct, were companions of this Robin Hood:—they were usually known by the names of Friar Tuck, and Little John.

But a far more formidable enemy than these was Prince John, Richard's youngest brother, —the wicked son of Henry II. whose undutiful conduct had so disturbed the latter part of that king's life. When John had no longer a father to disobey, he turned against his brother ; for he had not learnt, as Richard had done, to repent of crimes which had already brought down his father's grey hairs with sorrow to the grave. John was at last brought to throw himself at his brother's feet, and ask for pardon ; and then Richard gave another proof of that generosity which formed the brightest part of his character—for instead of

taking any revenge on John for his treasonable conduct, he pardoned him with these words,—"I forgive him, and hope I shall as easily forget his injuries, as he will my pardon."

Richard's life and reign were of no long duration. While he was engaged in storming a castle in Normandy, he received a wound from an arrow, which, from neglect or mismanagement, soon became dangerous, and caused his death. The soldier who had shot that arrow, was taken, and brought before Richard as he lay dying. Irritated with pain, Richard sternly asked the prisoner, "What have I ever done to you, that you have thus sought my life?" "What have you done?" answered the soldier, whose name was Gourdon;—"you killed with your own hands my father and my two brothers, and you intended to have killed me. I am now in your power, and you may inflict upon me what torments you please; but I shall endure them all with pleasure, because I have been so happy as to free the world from a tyrant." This was a bold answer; but it was just an answer which a bold soldier, and a generous-hearted man like Richard, could understand. He could fully comprehend the strong feeling of revenge which had urged Gourdon to aim that fatal arrow; and instead of being angry, he freely forgave the prisoner, and ordered a sum of

money to be presented to him. But one of his attendants, less generous than himself, seized Gourdon, unknown to Richard, and put him to a cruel death. Cœur de Lion died a few days after he had received the wound. He was only forty-one years old, and had reigned ten.

I dare say you have been interested in the character and actions of this brave king, and that he is, on the whole, a greater favourite with you than many of his predecessors have been. There is indeed much to admire in Richard's disposition. His generosity, his open-heartedness, and particularly his forgiveness of injuries, and the kindness which he was so ready to show to his enemies, are well worthy of our admiration, and of our imitation too. The early part of his life was, as you remember, very far from what it ought to have been; and therefore his good conduct afterwards, as a king, was the more remarkable, and showed much right and proper feeling. At the same time, we must recollect, that what we are pleased with in Richard, was the result of mere natural disposition; for he was, in all probability, quite destitute of any thing like real religion, and true Christian principle. And therefore, when I advise you to imitate the good parts of his character, I mean that you should seek to be generous, and kind, and



forgiving, from very different motives from those according to which, we may suppose, our brave king acted.—Not from mere feeling; not from desire of praise; not simply from a wish to please others, and to be thought noble, and generous, and open-hearted;—but from a sincere desire to obey those precepts of God's word, "Love your enemies,"—"Be ye kind one to another; tender-hearted; forgiving one another, even as God, for Christ's sake, hath forgiven you."

## XVIII. A CRUEL KING, AND A WEAK ONE.

A.D. 1199—1272.

John hath seiz'd Arthur; and it cannot be,  
That, whiles warm life plays in that infant's veins,  
The misplac'd John should entertain an hour,  
One minute, nay, one quiet breath of rest.  
A sceptre, snatch'd with an unruly hand,  
Must be as 'boisterously maintain'd as gain'd;  
And he that stands upon a slippery place,  
Makes nice of no vain hold to stay him up; —  
That John may stand, then Arthur needs must fall.

SHAKESPEARE.

You will not anticipate much pleasure from the reign of John, who now succeeded Richard on the English throne. We have already seen that he was an undutiful son, and a treacherous brother; and now we shall read of him as an unjust and cruel king. And first, I must tell you, that John had no right to the crown of which he took possession at Richard's death. You will remember there was an elder brother named Geoffrey, who had died, leaving a little

son called Arthur, who became Duke of Brittany. This young prince was now the proper heir to the throne, as Richard had left no children to succeed him. But John, always selfish and cruel, and determined to please and gratify himself at the expense of every body who stood in his way, seized the crown, and determined to put young Arthur to death, lest he should become his rival. There is some uncertainty as to the real fate of this unfortunate prince ; but it is generally supposed, that the men hired by John to murder him, neglected to obey the cruel order ; and that he was for a time kept in concealment, while a report was spread that he was actually dead. But John, at last, discovered that he was still alive ; removed him to the castle of Rouen in France, and coming there himself one night in a boat, commanded the young prince to be brought before him. Arthur fell on his knees, and begged his uncle to spare his life ; but the cruel John stabbed him with his own hands, and then threw his body into the river Seine.

The nobles of Brittany were, as you may suppose, exceedingly grieved and angry at this barbarous deed. They summoned John to appear ; he did not attend to the summons, but he was sentenced to the forfeiture of all his possessions in France ; his Norman vassals forsook him ; he was obliged to leave France,

and Normandy was lost as a part of the dominions of the kings of England.

John had troubles in England, as well as in France, and we cannot wonder that troubles should attend so bad a man wherever he might be. First, he had a quarrel with Pope Innocent III. Innocent required obedience from John in some matters relating to an appointment in the church; and John resisted, and refused compliance. The Pope then became exceedingly angry; and in order to bring John to obedience, he put the kingdom under an interdict. I must, however, explain to you what this means. By a decree of the Pope, who was at that time acknowledged to be the head of the church in this country, the nation was at once deprived of all the public rites of religion; no churches were opened, no bells were rung, no service was read over the dead; and the people were not allowed to eat meat, or to indulge themselves in any diversion or amusement, or even to salute one another, or to pay attention to their external appearance, or comforts of any kind. All this was, as you may imagine, a severe punishment; and the kingdom being put under the Pope's interdict was what a nation would very much dread.

But Innocent carried his vengeance against John still farther. He actually absolved his subjects from their oaths of allegiance to him;

and gave them permission to set aside his authority as king ; and he even threatened to give away John's dominions to the king of France. At last John was frightened by all these measures into submission ; he consented to do what Innocent required of him ; but he had afterwards to go through many humiliating ceremonies, before he was restored to the Pope's favour. You will see, from all this, to what a length the power of the Pope had risen in our country at this time, and what fearful consequences might arise from such an extent of authority.

John's next quarrel was with the barons ; for he was neither loved nor respected by any party with whom he had to do. During preceding reigns, the kings of England had gradually been rising in power ; and this gave offence to the barons, who were a large and important body of men, and had been accustomed to have their rights and privileges attended to. Henry I., had granted a charter, securing liberty to the people in many particulars ; but this charter had not been much regarded of late years ; and now the barons required that it should be confirmed and acted upon by the king ; and they determined to rise in arms against him if he did not comply with their request. It was John's known meanness and disposition to tyranny which so

excited the barons against him ; no doubt they would not have acted with so much violence towards a wise and a just sovereign.

John at first angrily rejected the request, and then the barons at once proceeded to war. After some hostilities had passed between the two parties, the king consented to meet the barons at Runnemede, near Windsor, and there he signed and sealed the charter that was required of him. This charter is commonly called Magna Charta. It contained other matters besides those of Henry I's charter, and is, in fact, the foundation of most of the rights and privileges which we enjoy in England at the present day. The signing of Magna Charta is therefore an event very important to be remembered in our national history ; and you should bear in mind the date in which it took place,—June 19, 1215.

Some parts of this charter related chiefly to the barons ; but there were other benefits conferred by it which more nearly concern ourselves. I will mention some of them which you will be able to understand, and to be very thankful for. Merchants were to be allowed to transact business, without being exposed to arbitrary impositions. There was to be one weight and measure established through the kingdom. All freemen were permitted to go in and out of the country at pleasure, and to

dispose of their property by will, according to their own wishes : and they were never to be imprisoned, or fined, or punished in any way, but according to the law of the land ; and courts and tribunals were to be held at stated times and places, for the administration of justice through the country. All these enactments were most important for the security of our rights and privileges as the free people of England ; and Magna Charta is preserved to this day as one of the most valuable of our national treasures. The signing of the Charter was an event brought about with much disturbance, and quarrelling, and discontent ; yet it was one of the many instances we see continually of good arising out of evil, and of lasting benefit being secured through temporary trouble and difficulty.

John signed Magna Charta rather because he was compelled, than from any wish to secure the liberties of his people ; and he determined not to adhere to what he had promised, if he could possibly avoid doing so. He sent therefore to the Pope, and laid the charter before him. Innocent was, this time, quite disposed to favour John, and to take his part against the barons, because Magna Charta abridged *his* power as well as the king's. So he sent a bull, or letter, annulling the charter altogether, and forbidding the barons, and

even John himself, to pay any regard to it. And now civil war began again ; and the barons, being in great difficulty, sent to the king of France, and begged help from him. They even offered to give the crown of England to his son Louis, saying, that John had no right to it, and that he had been already deposed on account of the murder of Prince Arthur. Louis accordingly came over to this country, and we cannot tell what consequences might have ensued, had not the death of John saved the nation from the danger to which it was, just then, so much exposed. He died while preparing to fight one great battle for his crown ; and his death is said to have been hastened by the vexation he suffered at losing a large amount of his treasures, in crossing that arm of the sea called the Wash, which he ventured to do during the time of an inundation, at high water.

Before we pass on to John's successor, I must mention one other instance of this king's cruelty, though you are, I am sure, already weary of reading a reign of so much wickedness and crime.

The Jews living in England at this time, had been much persecuted, not only by John, but under previous sovereigns also ; and a grievous national crime this persecution was. For though the Jews have indeed committed



a dreadful sin, in their rejection and crucifixion of the Messiah, and are justly punished by God himself, and scattered through the world, far from their own land,—yet we know from Scripture, that they are His chosen people still; that future blessedness is in store for them, when they repent and believe; and that the word still holds good which was spoken to Abraham so many ages ago,—“Blessed is he that blesseth thee, and cursed is he that curs-eth thee.”

But I was going to tell you of a particular instance of cruelty in John, to one of this despised race. He once demanded a large sum of money from a Jew, as a fine for some alleged offence. This the Jew refused to pay; and then John ordered that one of his teeth should be pulled out every day till he complied. The poor Jew lost seven teeth, and then, in order to preserve the remainder, he consented to pay the sum required. One instance of this kind shows us much of the heartless selfishness and cold barbarity of this unprincipled king. The name of John is handed down from age to age in the history of England, as an awful example of an undutiful son, a treacherous brother, a cruel uncle, an unjust king, and, as the sad consequence of all this,—a miserable man.

The reign of Henry III. the son and suc-

cessor of John, was longer than that of almost any king of England. It is not, however, one that will very much interest you, as the greater part of it was taken up with disputes and civil wars between the king and the barons. When John died, Henry was quite a little boy ; he was therefore unable to rule the kingdom himself ; but the government was carried on for some years very wisely and well by the Earl of Pembroke. Through his good management, the succession was quietly settled, and the dangers from France, which, you remember, were so formidable just when John died, were happily averted. But in process of time, the Earl of Pembroke died ; and as young Henry grew up, and became old enough to reign in his own person, he showed himself by no means likely to prove a wise or a good sovereign. He was indeed mild and amiable ; and so far his subjects must have been glad to see in him so great a contrast to his father. But then he was weak in mind and principle, and easily governed by those whom he loved, and who gained his favour and confidence.

And here I must just say something to you about these traits of character in Henry III. ; I wish you to look at what was right, and also at what was wrong in them. I am sure you will say it was right to be kind, and amiable, and gentle, and affectionate ; right to have

friends, and to love, and value, and confide in them. And this is all quite true; but then at the same time we must remember that it is important for us to *act*, as well as to *feel* rightly. Now, when Henry had to act, he usually acted wrong; he did something foolish or unwise, and thus brought himself and his country into great trouble and difficulty. He was not indeed gifted with those talents for governing of which many other sovereigns were possessed; and for that he was not responsible. All our talents come from God, and He gives as much or as little of them as He sees fit. But every one is responsible for the use he makes of his talents, whether great or small, few or many; and here it was that Henry failed. He certainly had the power of choosing friends able to advise and to assist him; and had he done so, the affairs of the kingdom might have been conducted properly, as in the days of the Earl of Pembroke. But instead of this, Henry chose only such friends as happened to please himself at the moment; and they were generally foreigners, which was of course displeasing to the English nation. And then, which was worse than all, Henry frequently grew tired of his favourites, and changed one for another. This showed him to be fickle, as well as weak; and affection so

thoughtlessly bestowed, and so soon withdrawn, was scarcely worth possessing at all.


Bear in mind then these defects of King Henry. Remember that when any duty is to be performed, (and we all have duties) we must endeavour to act with wisdom ; and if we are deficient in wisdom ourselves, then we should ask counsel from those upon whose principles and judgment we may rely ; and above all, we should seek direction from Him who is able and willing to bestow upon those who ask Him, not only wisdom in the concerns of another world, but wisdom also to enable us rightly to guide our temporal affairs, as long as we sojourn here. "If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him."

Henry had, in the early part of his reign, renewed and confirmed the Great Charter ; but unhappily he did not act in conformity to his own promises ; and moreover he offended his English subjects by frequently asking money from them, while at the same time he treated them with so little respect, as always to prefer foreigners to themselves. All this made the barons very angry ; they remonstrated with Henry on the matter, and he promised fair and well ; but he was as uncertain in regard to his promises, as he was in regard to his friend-

ships, so that little or no dependence could be placed on his word. And this is another bad point in his character. A person whose word is of no value, because it is so often broken, is one who cannot be respected or beloved. This disregard of promises is a fault frequently found in persons of weak mind and principle. They may not intend to break their word ; but fear or impulse often leads them to make a promise without due consideration ; and afterwards they find they have not the will or the power to perform it. Persons of this class of mind should be particularly careful in promising, lest they should unwittingly be led into the sin of breaking a promise, which is, in fact, another form of lying.

There lived in this reign a nobleman of great power and influence, named Simon de Montfort. He was Earl of Leicester, and brother-in-law of the king, having married a sister of Henry. This nobleman determined to bring matters to a point with the king and the barons, and to establish those rights and privileges to which the country was entitled.

Simon de Montfort was a clever man, and we are indebted to him for some very useful things ; but we cannot approve of the violent manner in which he behaved towards the king ; for he actually raised a rebellion among the barons against him. Civil war followed,



and in a battle which took place at Lewes between the two parties, Henry was defeated, and taken prisoner by the Earl of Leicester, with his brave young son Prince Edward. The government was thus left for a time in Leicester's hands; and then it was that he accomplished what was certainly much for the benefit of this country,—the assembling of a regular Parliament, formed very much like that of the present time; that is, consisting of representatives from the various towns or boroughs of the kingdom, as in our House of Commons, as well as of bishops and nobles, as in our House of Lords.

Prince Edward was very different from his father. He was high-spirited and fond of war and action; and he soon effected his escape from the custody of the Earl of Leicester. One of the king's party, the Earl of Gloucester, planned with the prince how this escape should be managed. He found means of sending a very swift horse to Edward; and one day, when the prince was riding out as usual, attended by De Montfort's guard, he contrived to get in advance of the others, and then, quickening his pace, he rode away on his fleet horse far out of the sight, and beyond the pursuit of those who had the charge of him. The guards followed, but were quite unable to overtake him; so Edward escaped; and being soon joined by the royalist party, he raised

an army, and fought a battle against the earl of Leicester and the barons, at Evesham.

In that battle Leicester was killed, and the king rescued, and once more placed on the throne. After this, the affairs of the country became more settled, and nothing very particular occurred during the remainder of Henry's long reign of fifty-six years.

The two kings of whom we have been speaking to-day, are held up to us in history not as examples, but as warnings ; and as I have pointed out to you the chief faults in their characters, I shall not add much more about them here. You have seen the dreadful picture of a cruel, tyrannical character, in John : and you have seen the bad effects of an unprincipled, though amiable disposition, illustrated in Henry III. And now, do not say that there is nothing for *you* to learn from these kings, however different you may be from them in natural character, or in education, or in circumstances. Remember that the human heart is much the same in all cases ; and that there is great need for us to watch over ourselves, even in those very points in which we may vainly think we are least in danger. Learn then, from the histories of John and Henry, to be kind, gentle, mild, amiable ;—but, at the same time, learn to be truthful also ; and let it always be your aim, not only to mean what you *say*, but also to perform what you promise.

## XIX. THE WARRIOR KING.

A.D. 1272—1307.

Ruin seize thee, ruthless king !  
Confusion on thy banners wait !  
Though fann'd by conquest's crimson wing,  
They mock the air with idle state.  
Not helm nor hauberk's twisted mail,  
Nor ev'n thy virtues, tyrant, shall avail  
To save thy secret soul from nightly fears,  
From Cambria's curse, from Cambria's tears.

GRAY.

WE have already heard something of the brave Edward, the son and successor of Henry III. You remember his imprisonment by the Earl of Leicester, after the battle of Lewes, and how he effected his escape, and afterwards defeated De Montfort in the battle of Evesham. We next hear of him in the Holy Land, fighting in the Crusades ; and there his life was in great danger from a wound inflicted by a poisoned arrow, from the hand of an assassin hired by the Saracens to murder him. It is said, that his good and affectionate wife Eleanor saved him by sucking out the poison, at the risk



of her own life ; and thus he was preserved for further deeds of arms, and future victories, when he became king.

But however brilliant the course Edward I. may have been, we shall have to mourn over many an act of cruelty as heartless and ferocious as any of those committed by his grandfather king John ; and these must much lessen our admiration of his bravery and prowess. The lines at the head of the chapter will have prepared you to hear this. They allude to a circumstance connected with the conquest of Wales, of which conquest I am just going to tell you.

You recollect that the ancient Britons had long since been forced by the Saxons to retire into the mountains and fastnesses of Wales ; and there, for many ages, they had been living with an independent territory of their own, and a succession of native princes to rule over them. The king reigning at this time, was Llewellyn. He had been concerned some years before in the rebellion of De Montfort and the barons ; but with the rest of the offenders of that time, he was pardoned before the conclusion of Henry's life. But Edward had now a scheme in view, to accomplish which poor Llewellyn's life was to be sacrificed. He had planned in his own mind to conquer Wales, and to add it to his dominions.

And so with his armed soldiers, and his warlike captains, the fiery king marched into the land of rocks and mountains ; and amongst the wild scenery of Mount Snowdon and the river Conway, he fought and conquered the brave Welsh, slew their king Llewellyn, took prisoner his brother David, conveyed him to Shrewsbury, and then sentenced him to a traitor's death, because he had defended by arms the liberties of his native land.

But there was another barbarous act which Edward committed during his Welsh conquest, to which the poem, from which those lines are taken, especially refers. The ancient Welsh delighted in music and in song ; and it was customary for their soldiers to be led on to war, and encouraged to deeds of valour, by the warlike strains of their native bards or poets. The Welsh harpers are even now celebrated for their skill in minstrelsy ; and you may imagine the effect produced upon a band of brave and spirited people, still free and independent, when led on by the warlike songs of these wild bards. We all know the power of music in moving the passions and feelings of the mind, whether to excite or to soothe,—

And when our country's cause provokes to arms,  
How martial music ev'ry bosom warms !

*Edward well knew this ; and he considered*

the Welsh bards as amongst his greatest enemies, simply because they stirred up the people to fight in defence of their country and their freedom. He actually, therefore, assembled a large number of them together upon some false pretence, and then barbarously murdered them in cold blood. And so the poet represents Edward pursuing his victorious career, up the steep of Snowdon, attended by his fierce captains and his warlike soldiers, when suddenly there strikes upon his ear the song, the *last* song of a lingering bard;—the only one remaining of his race; for all his brethren have already been slaughtered by the cruel command of the stern conqueror. Edward pauses,—and the wild strain continues, calling down vengeance upon the “ruthless king,” whose rage has stilled the “high-born Hoel’s harp, and soft Llewellyn’s lay;” and then it goes on to prophesy of the future destiny of Edward’s successors, and of all the sorrows and troubles in store for his descendants. For, like the ancient Druids, these Welsh bards are supposed in the poem to be endowed with the spirit of prophecy, and to be enabled to foretell future events in their moments of poetic rapture and inspiration. And then, having passed through the long *succession* of the line of princes springing *from* Edward, the bard is represented, in a

fit of mingled rage and triumph, casting himself headlong into the torrent, to be heard and seen no more.

Be thine despair and scepter'd care ;

To triumph and to die are mine.

He spoke, and headlong from the mountain's height,  
Deep in the roaring flood, he plung'd to endless night.

It would indeed be well, could we think of all this simply as poetic fiction, and indulge ourselves with gazing at the wild picture of the scene so strikingly drawn by the poet, without being pained by the reflection that the leading features of the story are most probably true. The murder of the bards has indeed been doubted by some historians ; but the general conduct of Edward during this conquest, will not allow us to excuse him from many a deed of cruelty and blood.

On the north-west coast of Wales, looking out upon the Menai straits, stands the fine old castle of Caernarvon. It was built by Edward I. at the time of the conquest of that country, and still remains a memorial of his prowess and his cruelty. A little dark room within the massive walls of that ancient castle, is still shown as the birth-place of his son Edward of Caernarvon, afterwards his successor—king Edward II. It is said, that when the Welsh had been reduced to obedience and submission to their conqueror, Edward, who

was then at Caernarvon, in order to pacify *or* to please his newly acquired subjects, promised to present them with a prince born in their own land, unable to speak a word of English, and of unblamable character and reputation; and then retiring into the afore-mentioned little room in the castle, he brought thence in his arms his little son, the infant Edward, and introduced him to the assembled representatives of the Welsh nation as their first prince. From that time, the eldest son of the reigning sovereign of England has borne the title of Prince of Wales.

But we must now leave poor conquered Wales; always however cherishing a feeling of respect and affection for its ancient race, the descendants of the first occupants of our native isle, who still speak the original language of Britain, and who love and delight in its tones and accents, however harsh and unmusical they may sound to our more refined and polished ears.

The next achievements of Edward were connected with Scotland. That country too was as yet free and independent, though some advantages had been gained there by Henry II.; and the king at that time had been constrained by him to acknowledge the superior power of *England*. It so happened that, in the reign of *Edward I.* a difficulty arose as to the succes-

sion to the Scottish throne. There were two rival competitors, each of whom thought he had the greatest right to be king;—Robert Bruce, and John Baliol. So they determined to appeal to Edward, and agreed that the decision should be left in his hands. Edward was always glad of any fresh opportunity of extending his authority; he consented therefore to be arbitrator in the matter, and decided in favour of Baliol, not indeed with any intention of establishing him on the throne of Scotland, but rather in the hope of getting him into his own power, and finally obtaining that country for himself. In the years that followed, there was a great deal of fighting between the two countries. At last, Baliol was defeated, and taken prisoner; and when he regained his liberty, he banished himself to France, where he shortly afterwards died in obscurity. His successor on the throne of Scotland was Robert Bruce.

At this time, there appeared in Scotland a very brave man who stood up boldly to contend for the rights and privileges of his country. This man was Sir William Wallace. He fought a battle against Edward at Falkirk, and though he was defeated, he did not give up his hope of yet recovering the liberty of his country; so he still fought on. But another defeat made it necessary for the brave Wallace

to retire, and hide himself, and he took refuge in the house of a person whom he considered to be his friend,—Sir John Monteith, hoping to remain in safety with him until he should be able once more to renew the struggle. But, unhappily, Sir John Monteith proved himself to be a false, not a true friend; and the expectation of gaining favour and a reward from Edward, was quite sufficient to induce that heartless man to deliver up the brave Wallace into the cruel hands of the English king. The patriot of Scotland was seized, taken to London, and there hanged as a traitor, and his death is another blot, another dark stain on the character of the ambitious Edward. Still, however, the contest continued. Edward had vowed vengeance on the Scotch; and he declared that he would not reseate himself quietly on his throne, until he had completed the conquest of their country. But just as he was preparing to go again into Scotland, and had actually proceeded northward as far as Carlisle, he was taken ill, and became unable either to continue his journey, or to return home. His recovery was soon despaired of; and then he hastily sent for his son Edward, Prince of Wales, and with his dying breath, exhorted him to continue the war which he *himself* was unable to complete; and not to *rest* until Scotland was finally conquered.

And so Edward died, as he had lived ; breathing out cruelty and vengeance to the very last, and planning schemes of future conquest in this world, when his immortal soul was just about to enter an eternal state.

The history of Edward's reign is one over which it will be well for us to pause, that we may reflect a little upon the solemn lessons which it has to teach us. One of these lessons is the uncertainty of all human friendships. The Bible, you remember, frequently tells us, not to trust in "an arm of flesh ;" to "put no confidence in princes, nor in any child of man ;" it even says, "Trust ye not in a friend ; put no confidence in a guide." We have just seen, in the sad story of poor Wallace, the fatal consequences of *his* trust in a faithless friend. Little did he think, when fleeing from the vengeance of Edward, that he should find in the open doors and kind speeches of Monteith, greater danger still. And when time proved what that so-called friend really was,—when the officers appeared and seized the unsuspecting victim, and when Wallace found himself bound as a prisoner, and about to be put to death as a traitor, through the treachery of one whom he had once loved and trusted,—oh, what must his feelings have been ? and how bitterly must he have mourned over the deceit and hypocrisy which had so betrayed and



destroyed him ! And though, in our happier days, we seldom or ever hear of deeds such as these, yet we have proofs enough of the uncertainty and instability of mere worldly friendship ;—of that I mean, which is founded only upon earthly and human principles. Kind looks and fair speeches may deceive us even now ; and often, very often, it happens, that those who have professed affection in the days of prosperity, are lost to us when sorrow comes, and when tenderness and sympathy are most needed. Ah, it is well to remember, that the same Bible which warns us of the uncertainty of worldly friends, points us to one who is “ a friend that sticketh closer than a brother ; ” who is “ the same, yesterday, to-day, and for ever.” Those who confide in Him, will find He is indeed “ a friend that loveth at all times.”

But I must just say a word or two about the uncertainty of human greatness, as well as about the instability of worldly friendship. The career of Edward was certainly a very brilliant one. He made many conquests, and gained a great deal of power. Wales was conquered ; Scotland was humbled ; and just, as it seemed, on the point of being subdued ; many years of prosperity appeared stretched out before Edward's ambitious eyes ;—and then, *that very moment*, death came, and took t

thoughtless king away to a world where all his conquests could be of no avail, and where schemes of earthly ambition would be heard of no more. It must have been an awful sight, —that death-bed of Edward I. There he lay ; —sickness and death on his pale countenance, and yet his eyes sparkling with rage and fury even then ; and his last thoughts, and his last words, turning to deeds of vengeance and cruelty. And there beside him stood his young son Edward, waiting in mournful silence to receive the final instructions of his dying father. And what instructions they were ! To fight, to conquer, to destroy ; to rest not until Scotland was subdued, and her people brought to submit to his rule and government !

And now, contrast all this with another and a very different scene. Can you not remember the account we read of the death of a great king,—greater far than Edward,—one who had ruled and conquered too ;—not as Edward had done indeed, for he had ruled in the fear of God, and he had conquered by the power of that arm which Edward neither recognized nor trusted. When the time came for that great monarch to die, he too called his son and successor to his side, to instruct and to admonish him. But how different were his *instructions* and admonitions from those of

Edward ! Picture to yourselves that aged king.—His eyes are uplifted in hope, and joy, and love ;—then he turns to his young son, and thus he speaks to him : “ Thou, Solomon, my son, know thou the God of thy fathers, and serve him with a perfect heart, and with a willing mind ; if thou seek Him, He shall be found of thee ; but if thou forsake Him, He will cast thee away for ever.” And he too leaves a work for his son and successor to complete ; not a work of conquest,—but the holy, sacred work of building a temple for the worship of God. Many troubles and dangers he may expect that young prince to meet with in his future course,—yet still the aged monarch can hope and trust, for he is resting not on his own strength, nor on that of his son,—but on the word and power of Him who cannot lie, and who will never fail. “ He hath made with me,” he says, “ an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure ; this is all my salvation, and all my desire.”—And so he dies.—Which of these two scenes would you rather gaze upon ? and which, think you, is the greater, the happier, the more glorious, of those two dying kings ?

## XX. AN AMBITIOUS CAREER, AND ITS END.

A.D. 1307—1377.

Mighty victor, mighty lord,  
Low on his funeral couch he lies ;  
No pitying heart, no eye afford  
A tear to grace his obsequies.  
Is the sable warrior fled ?  
Thy son is gone—he rests among the dead.  
The swarm that in the noon-tide beam were born ?  
Gone to salute the rising morn.—GRAY.

VERY different indeed our story to-day will be from that of the brave conqueror Edward I. His son inherited neither his abilities nor his ambition, and the reign of Edward II. is one of the saddest and most inglorious that we meet with in English history. I do not mean that it was so, because Edward was not a great warrior, or because he was not a clever man ; for he might have been happy and useful notwithstanding ;—there were causes connected with other parts of his character, which led to the unfortunate events of his melancholy reign.

You remember, when speaking of Henry III. I told you he was in the habit of making favourites, and that he was frequently led by them to act in an unwise and improper way. Now there was the same fault in Edward II.; he was constantly under the influence of some unworthy but favourite companion. One of these was named Piers Gaveston. He was a young man of so bad a character, that Edward I. had forbidden his son to associate with him at all, and had actually banished him from the country. On his father's death, however, Edward II. recalled Gaveston; and thus, you see, he added to his former fault, a second,—that of disobedience. Gaveston soon became so hated by the nation, that a revolt took place, in consequence of the improper favours bestowed upon him by the king; and the unhappy man was at last taken prisoner, and put to death.

Edward was at first so occupied with his idle companions and foolish pleasures, that he paid no attention to the charge of his father about the conquest of Scotland. But after Gaveston's death, the war was renewed; and with a large army Edward went to Scotland, and fought against Bruce at Bannockburn in Stirlingshire. But that battle was very different from those *which the first Edward had been accustomed to fight*, in the days of Wallace. The English

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were completely beaten ; and the defeat of Bannockburn is considered quite a disgrace in our English annals, which usually tell only of success and victory.

Now when people have done wrong, and suffered in consequence, as Edward had, it is well for them to reflect, and to endeavour so to profit from past experience, as not to fall into the same faults and troubles again. But Edward had not the wisdom to do this. Past experience taught him no useful lesson for the future ; and so, as soon as he found another companion likely to please him, he took him into his favour, and treated him in the same wrong and foolish manner that he had treated Gaveston ; loading him with presents and riches which he took from the angry and discontented barons. This new favourite's name was Hugh Spenser.

And now, we cannot wonder that Edward's troubles should increase upon him. A strong party was formed against him, headed, sad to say, by his own wife, Isabella, the sister of the French king. She went over to France, obtained assistance there, and then returned with an army, which was soon joined by many of those who hated the government of the unhappy and misguided king. Edward was made prisoner ; his favourite, Spenser, was taken and slain ; and the cruel Isabella forced her hus-

band to resign his government, and undertook to rule the kingdom herself. In all these deeds she was assisted by a favourite of her own,—a very bad man, named Mortimer.

Poor Edward was treated in the most cruel manner by the heartless keepers to whose custody he was entrusted ; and at last, by the order of Isabella, he was barbarously murdered in Berkeley Castle, in Gloucestershire. So ended this sad and disgraceful reign : and the only lesson I will ask you to draw from it, ere we pass on to what is more pleasant and cheerful, is this ;—the great danger of choosing for your friends and companions those who may lead you into what is foolish, or what is wrong. It was this that brought on the ruin of the unhappy Edward of Caernarvon.

Now that book which we referred to in our last chapter, to show the uncertainty of worldly friendships, gives us some very wise directions respecting the choice of friends, and these directions are particularly addressed to the young, because *they* are especially liable to be ensnared, and led into evil, by the influence of designing and wicked companions. Solomon, the wise Solomon, says, “ My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not.” “ Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men.” “ Walk in the way of *good men*, and keep the paths of the righ-

teous." Let your friends be the friends of God and of truth ;—those who will lead you in the right way, and who will faithfully and kindly reprove and advise you when you go wrong, instead of flattering and concealing your faults from you ; and then, friendship will be to you a safe, not a dangerous thing ; and though you may be separated for a time from those you love, by death or other causes, yet you may look forward to being re-united to them in a happier world, to part again no more.

Edward III., the son and successor of Edward of Caernarvon, was as different in character from his father, as Edward II. had been from *his*. In military talents, and personal courage, he more resembled his grandfather ; but he had greater generosity of disposition, and less cruelty. We shall, I think, find much to admire in the character of Edward III.

You remember the state in which England was left, at the death of Edward II. when the country was under the charge of Queen Isabella and the unprincipled Mortimer. For some time after the accession of the new king, the government and the authority were kept so much in the hands of his mother and her favourite, that it was very evident Edward would have little hope of carrying out his own measures, while *they* remained in power.



With the advice and assistance therefore of some noblemen who were attached to his interests, Edward formed a plan for the seizure of Mortimer, who, with the Queen, was in the possession of the castle of Nottingham. This was a strong place of defence, and one into which it was very difficult to gain access. Edward and his party, however, found means to induce some of those in the castle to point out a secret underground passage, nearly filled up with rubbish ; and entering in this way, they surprised and seized Mortimer, who was soon after put to death. The queen was differently treated. She was allowed to live ; but Edward kept her in perpetual confinement, though he treated her with personal respect, and visited her occasionally. Shocking as it is to read of a mother being thus held captive by her own son, we cannot but see that Isabella was punished less than her crimes deserved ; particularly that dreadful crime, the murder of her husband.

And now Edward felt himself free, and at liberty to pursue his own plans ; and a bright scheme of future conquest he had already formed. Isabella was, you remember, a French princess ; and it occurred to the ambitious mind of Edward, that he might claim the country of *France* as his inheritance, in right of his *mother*. A long course of wars, and a succes-

sion of brilliant victories, followed this bold attempt of Edward ; and many a battle was fought, and many a life lost, in contending for the wished-for prize. There were two victories in particular, gained in France, which are always associated in English minds with the names of Edward III., and of his gallant son, the Black Prince. You will wonder, perhaps, at this particular title ; he was so called from the suit of black armour which he was accustomed to wear ; and he it is who, in consequence of this circumstance, is referred to, in the lines heading the chapter, as the "Sable Warrior."

The first of the great victories which I have to mention, took place at Cressy, in the year 1346. The French were far superior in numbers in this battle to the English, yet they were completely defeated through the valour of Edward and his brave son. The Black Prince was then not more than sixteen or seventeen years of age ; but he was entrusted with the command of a part of his father's army, and led on his soldiers to the fight with great courage and prudence. Edward was engaged in another part of the field, but his thoughts were continually turned upon his son, and he was rejoiced to hear, from time to time, of his bravery and courage. Once, when he was informed that the prince was in a post

of great danger, he enquired whether his son had requested his assistance, and being told that he had not, he desired the messenger to go back, and say to him, that the honour of that day was to be his own, and that he would be able, without his father's help, to repel the enemy. Young Edward and his soldiers fought more bravely than ever on hearing this; and when the dangers of the day had ended in a glorious victory, and the Black Prince hastened to his father, to share with him the honour they had gained, Edward clasped him in his arms, and exclaimed—"My brave son! you *are* my son, for valiantly have you acquitted yourself to-day; you have shown yourself worthy of empire." Ah, little did the proud father think in that happy moment, that he would one day have to mourn over the untimely grave of that promising son!

But all this time, another war was going on at home, under the conduct not of Edward, nor of his son, but of his wife Philippa, a woman as much distinguished for her bravery as either of them might be. Had Philippa possessed no other qualities, we should indeed have wondered at her powers of body and mind, but we never could have admired or loved her. But this queen had gentleness, and kindness of heart, and generosity,—qualities far more estimable than personal courage, and skill in

managing an army, or governing a country. We shall see an instance of these noble characteristics in Philippa by and bye.

It was the war with Scotland which Philippa was now conducting, and she managed it so skilfully that the king of Scotland was defeated, taken prisoner, and brought by the queen to London. She placed him in the tower; and then crossing the sea at Dover, joined her husband at Calais,—a town, you remember, on the coast of France, just opposite to England. This place was then in a state of siege. Edward and his army had been endeavouring, for many months, to bring the gallant defenders of the town to submit, and open the gates to him, but in vain. And now they were almost reduced to starvation from want of provisions, and had just determined to yield to Edward, as the only way of preserving their lives. The governor therefore, John of Vienne, mounted the walls, and made a signal to the English sentinels; and soon Sir Walter Manny, one of Edward's commanders, was sent to hear what he had to say. "Brave knight," said the governor, "I have been entrusted by my sovereign with this town; it is almost a year that you have besieged me, and I have endeavoured, as well as those under me, to do our duty. But you *know our present condition; we have no hopes*

of relief ; we are perishing with hunger. I am willing therefore to surrender, and desire, as the sole condition, to ensure the lives and liberties of these brave men who have so long shared with me every danger and fatigue." Manny told the brave governor, that he knew Edward was very angry with the people of Calais for holding out so long against him, and that he was determined to take vengeance on them, and to show them no mercy. "But," said Vienne, "consider ; this is not the treatment to which brave men are entitled. If any English knight had been in my situation, your king would have expected the same conduct from him. The inhabitants of Calais have done for their sovereign what deserves the esteem of every prince ; much more of so gallant a prince as Edward. Besides, I must tell you, that if we perish, we shall not perish unavenged ; and therefore it is for the interest of both sides to prevent these desperate extremities ; and I expect that you, brave knight, will interpose your good offices with your prince in our behalf."

This speech of the governor made a great impression upon Manny, as it was likely to do upon any reasonable person ; and he returned, and told Edward what had passed. But alas, Edward's spirit had been aroused by the long resistance which these brave people had made,

and the only promise that Manny could obtain from him was, that he would spare the lives of the inhabitants upon this condition,—that six of the chief citizens should be sent to him bare-headed and bare-footed, with ropes round their necks, to be dealt with as he should think proper.

And now imagine the grief of the poor people of Calais when this dreadful news was brought to them. They might indeed be spared,—but how? Only by the sacrifice of six of their best men, their noblest citizens, the most gallant defenders of their town! Who could have the heart to choose such men, or who would be generous enough voluntarily to offer themselves? It was a mournful conference; an awful silence followed; and then, at last, one man, and a fine noble spirited man he was, named Eustace de St. Pierre, stepped forward, and offered his life for the sake of his fellow citizens. And then another presented himself, and another, till at last six men were counted, six brave men, ready to sacrifice themselves to the fury of the stern conqueror. So they bade adieu to their weeping friends, and with ropes round their necks, and bare-headed and bare-footed, they proceeded to the English camp. They carried in their hands the keys of the city they had so long and so valiantly defended, laid them

at the feet of Edward, and then were led out to execution! And how do you think the king felt at that moment? Was there not some sorrow, some pity, some desire to revoke the cruel sentence? No, he seems to have had no feeling of the kind just then; for though he was naturally generous, ambition had hardened his heart, and selfishness had closed it to every thought of kindness. See to what dreadful crimes these passions may lead, if suffered to remain in the mind unsubdued and unrestrained!

And so, no doubt, the noble Eustace and his five companions would have soon fallen under the hand of the executioner, had there not been present one who, with equal courage and equal bravery, had a heart more tender, more truly noble, than Edward had. And this was Philippa, his amiable and generous queen. She could not bear the sad thought of these gallant men perishing, not for committing a fault, but actually for performing a duty, and performing it perseveringly and faithfully, for their country's cause. So she fell on her knees before Edward, and besought him with tears to spare the lives of those generous men. Happily, Edward was not so stern as to be unmoved by such an appeal as *this*. He loved his wife; he owed much to *her*; and perhaps too a lingering feeling of a

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right kind might have been present in his mind then ; and so love, and gratitude, and conscience might all have united to make him listen and yield. And he *did* yield. "I can refuse you nothing," he said, as he raised the gentle queen who was still kneeling before him ; and then with a glad heart she hastened to the men whose lives she had saved, brought them into her tent, and fed and clothed them, and sent them back, to the great joy of their fellow-citizens. O what a happy day that must have been at Calais, even though the happiness was checked by the thought that the liberty of the city, so long defended, was indeed gone !

This has been a long story, but I had no wish to pass it over, or to shorten it, because it is, I think, not only a very interesting, but a very instructive story. What does it teach us ? One lesson we may learn from it is this ; —that prosperity is often a great temptation to the human heart ; and that the possession of power is often very dangerous. It is a talent which requires to be used with much self-restraint, because the natural tendency of the corrupt heart is to tyrannize over those who are under our authority, instead of to behave towards them with love and tenderness. And then this story shows us how truly noble *it is to show mercy and compassion, and how*



well influence is employed in pleading the cause of those who are falsely accused, or unjustly oppressed. This we learn from Philippa, and I am sure we shall all admire, and I hope try to imitate, as far as may be, that generous queen. And do not let us forget the good Eustace de St. Pierre, and his noble conduct in offering to sacrifice himself for his fellow-citizens. What an example he sets us of disinterestedness! Whenever you feel inclined to be unreasonably angry with those with whom you have to do, try to think of this story of the siege of Calais; and remember that the wise man says, (and it would have been well had Edward remembered and acted upon those words,) "He that ruleth his spirit is greater than he that taketh a city."

But we have not yet done with the French wars. Ten years after the great battle of Cressy, happened the other victory I alluded to,—that of Poitiers. This battle was gained by the Black Prince, who had now become more experienced in the art of war, and it ended in the capture of John king of France. But what I wish to tell you now, is rather about the conduct of the Black Prince after the battle, than about his military prowess in fighting it; because, as you know, I am always *anxious* to find something in our stories for *you not only to admire but to imitate.*



King John of France was an amiable man, and much beloved by his subjects, who gave him the title of John the Good; and it was a happy thing for him in his misfortunes, that he fell into the hands of such a conqueror as the Black Prince, who could so well understand and appreciate what was good and great in another man, even though that man might be a rival or an enemy.

As soon as the battle was ended, the Black Prince went to his royal captive, kindly consoled and cheered him, prepared a repast for him in his own tent, and there waited upon him as if John had been his guest, instead of his prisoner. He did not say a word to him about his father's right to the French crown; never boasted of his own victory, nor of England's superiority over France;—all his endeavours now were to show kindness to the captured king, and to make his captivity as little painful to him as possible. We cannot help feeling, as we read of all this, how sad it was that war should have taken place between two such generous men as king John of France and the Black Prince, and that one should ever be the conqueror of the other. This was the unhappy consequence of ambition;—of Edward's desire to gain for his son the splendid territory of France. We shall

soon see how much disappointment followed all these vain hopes of earthly greatness !

At last the time came for the Black Prince to return to England, bringing with him his royal prisoner. It was a triumphant day for the prince when he passed through the streets of London, conducting king John, as his captive, by his side. But notwithstanding all the applause he received, young Edward behaved with the same true greatness still. The king of France was mounted upon a beautiful white horse, but the Prince himself rode only on a little black pony ; so that John looked more like the conqueror than like the prisoner. And when king Edward met them, and John was delivered up to him by his son, he received his prisoner with great kindness and courtesy, as if the French king was going to pay him a visit, not to become his captive. And yet such John actually was, notwithstanding all this kind treatment. He was conveyed to his stately prison ; and there he found, amongst his fellow-captives, another king, deprived, like himself, of his dominions and his liberty. This was David Bruce, king of Scotland, who had been eleven years a prisoner in England ; but soon after this, Edward restored him to his country, upon the payment of a sum of *money* for his ransom.

While John remained a prisoner in London, Edward continued fighting in France. But years passed away, and still he was no nearer to the accomplishment of his wishes than he had been at the commencement; for notwithstanding all the success of his arms, the people of France were as unwilling as ever to acknowledge him for their king; and he had no party, no friends in that country to espouse his cause. All this, and the heavy expense of carrying on the war, made Edward think at last of resigning his claim to the French crown and proposing peace. He promised to release John upon certain conditions, one of which was the payment of a large sum of money. The king of France was therefore conveyed to Calais, there to meet Edward, that they might both sign and ratify the treaty of peace. This treaty was, in many respects, very hard as regarded John; but when he had once bound himself to observe it, he determined to execute its terms to the very letter. He found, however, that it was difficult to do this, from the unwillingness of some of his nobles to submit to Edward's proposals. John therefore decided upon returning to England, in order to explain matters to Edward, and to express his willingness to remain in captivity, rather than violate a single article of the treaty made between them. John's friends and advisers strongly

urged him not to take this step ; having once left his place of confinement, they would gladly have persuaded him to remain with them, even at the expense of his word and agreement with Edward. But John was too honourable to listen to them for a moment. "No," he said ; "if truth should be banished from the rest of the earth, it ought at least to rest in the bosom of princes." So the noble king went back to the land of his captivity, never to return to his native country ; for he was shortly taken ill, and died in the Savoy Palace in London, where he had resided in the previous years of his confinement in England. So died this honourable man, leaving behind him an example of truthfulness and fidelity not often met with in the course of history. Contrast his character with that of another king of whom we have lately been reading ;— I mean Henry III., and then decide which of the two is more worthy to be imitated and admired.

And now we are drawing towards the close of Edward III's life and reign. That close was indeed a melancholy termination to the success and splendour of his early and prosperous days. Instead of gaining new possessions in France, he lost most of those he had already acquired ; for victory no longer followed him as in former years. Edward was growing old ; he was

unable to fight as he once had done; his gallant son too, "the sable warrior," was rapidly declining, and soon sunk into an early grave. The generous Philippa was gone also; and thus darkness and gloominess gathered around Edward's last days, and his sun went down in a dark cloudy sky.—And now turn once more to the lines which head this chapter. They are mournful indeed; but not more mournful than they are true. They are a faithful picture of the career not only of Edward, but of many who, like Edward, have formed and pursued schemes of earthly greatness. Like him they have begun life with bright hopes; no storm appeared; and no cloud seemed likely to arise. But then at last, evening came,—and the clouds gathered, and the sky darkened, and the day ended in a black and stormy night. Ah, this is not an untrue, nor an uncommon history of life, whatever may be thought of it by the young, and the happy, and the careless. The days will come when "the sun, and the light, and the moon, and the stars will be darkened;"—when "the clouds will return after the rain;"—and then, those who, like this once prosperous king, have no better hope than what earthly ambition may have raised, will be obliged to say, "We have no pleasure in them." How

different from the course of the Christian through life, and from the bright termination of *his* career :—"The path of the just is as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day."



## XXI. THE DAWN OF REFORMATION.

A.D. 1377—1399.

What must the king do now? Must he submit?  
The king shall do it. Must he be depos'd?  
The king shall be contented. Must he lose  
The name of king? So be it, let it go.  
I'll give my jewels, for a set of beads;  
My gorgeous palace, for a hermitage;  
My gay apparel, for an almsman's gown;  
My figur'd goblets, for a dish of wood;  
My sceptre, for a palmer's walking staff;  
My subjects, for a pair of carved saints;  
And my large kingdom, for a little grave,  
A little, little grave, an obscure grave.

SHAKESPEARE.

HAD the Black Prince survived his father, he would have been king on Edward's death. But, as you heard in the last chapter, he died early, and so the crown now passed to his son Richard, a boy of eleven years old. The country was governed, during Richard's minority, by his three uncles, the Dukes of York, Lancaster, and Gloucester; but their rule was not very much liked by the people, who had been



so long accustomed to their clever and wise king Edward III.

When Richard was about sixteen, a circumstance took place which, for a time, put the country into a state of great disorder. The late war in France, and the expense of the garrisons kept in those places which still belonged to England, rendered it necessary to procure some further supplies of money; and a tax was accordingly levied of three groats, about one shilling, upon every person who was above the age of fifteen. All were required to pay this tax,—the poor as well as the rich,—and this led to a great deal of discontent among the lower orders of the people, because they thought that so much should not be demanded from them as from their rich neighbours. So they considered themselves aggrieved and ill-treated; and instead of submitting to the tax imposed, or quietly and in a proper manner petitioning to be relieved from it, a large number rose in rebellion, being headed by two men called Wat Tiler and Jack Straw. They soon persuaded others to join them, and stirred them up by saying that all ought to be equal, and that there should be no distinction between the high and the low, the rich and the poor. And thus the mob proceeded to London, committing all sorts of riots on the way, under the direction of their chief

leader Wat Tiler. When young Richard heard that his unruly subjects were approaching London, he boldly determined to go himself to meet them, and try to bring them to a better mind, by kindness, and by yielding to their demands as far as it might be wise and proper to do so. While however Richard was talking to them, and promising to do what he reasonably could to satisfy them, Wat Tiler, who had a dagger in his hand, rudely laid hold of the bridle of the king's horse. The Mayor who was close to Richard, afraid that this bad man might injure or even kill his sovereign, struck Wat Tiler with his mace, and the attendants immediately rushed forward, and killed him. The mob were partly alarmed, and partly enraged at the loss of their leader; and some were preparing to avenge his death, when Richard, riding up into the midst of them, cried out, "What mean you? You have lost your leader; I am your king; follow me, *I will be your leader.*" Richard's coolness and presence of mind so struck the multitude, that they were all quieted immediately. They followed him, as he directed, to Islington; then he again promised to govern them well and kindly; and they all submissively laid down their arms, and retired to their homes. This shows the good effect of calmness, and a spirit of conciliation in dealing

with angry and turbulent persons. Richard's quiet courage on this occasion, prevented perhaps a great deal of blood-shed and loss of life.

Thus ended this formidable riot ; and before we pass on to another event in Richard's reign, let us pause and learn a lesson or two here. In our former stories, we have often seen the bad effects of tyranny exercised by those in power over their inferiors. To-day we have a lesson of a different kind. We learn how wrong, and how foolish too, it is for those who ought to be in subjection to their superiors, to disobey and rebel against their authority. I am not now speaking of the particular grievance of which Wat Tiler and his party complained ; nor saying whether it was right or wrong to impose upon them that tax which they disliked so much. What I wish is, to impress upon you this one thing,—the duty of subordination,—of yielding due obedience and respect to those whom the providence of God has set over us. If we turn once more to that book which teaches us how to act in every circumstance and station of life in which we can be placed, we shall see what a mistaken principle Wat Tiler argued upon, when he asserted that people should be all equal,—that there should be no distinction of rank,—that one should not be higher than another. The Bible teaches

us something quite different. We read there of powers, and rulers, and governors ; of masters, and of those in authority ; and we are told that "the powers that be, are ordained of God," and that "whosoever resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God." And therefore it is a duty we owe to God, as well as to man, to obey these rulers ; to acknowledge and to submit to their authority ; to show reverence and respect to those who are in any way above ourselves ; and to "render to all their dues ; tribute to whom tribute is due ; custom to whom custom ; fear to whom fear ; honour to whom honour."

And it is not only in the Bible that we learn this truth,—that one is raised above another, and that it is for the mutual good of all that it should be so. If we look all through nature, we shall find examples or illustrations of the very same kind. It is, as it were, the great principle upon which God acts universally.

You have often walked in a garden, or in a field, or in a wood. Have you not remarked a great deal of difference and variety among the trees, and the shrubs, and the flowers, growing there so beautifully, and in such rich luxuriance ? There is the tall tree, and the little moss carpeting its roots ;—the stately flower, and the tiny blossom, which you hardly

notice, at its side ;—the gay parterre, with its bright colours opening to the sun-beams, and the unpretending useful plants behind,—in some obscure corner perhaps,—not so much looked at and admired, but quite as necessary, and just as much thought of and cared for by the owner, as the gayest flower in the garden. Now did you ever wish to see this fair variety of things equalized, so that all might be made alike ? Would it be better, think you, that all the vegetable creation should be stately trees, or gay flowers, or delicate shrubs, fit only for the garden, or the green-house ? Is it not far more beautiful, as well as more useful, that there should be this variety, this diversity, this inequality ? Yes ; the Great Being who created these things, has wisely appointed them their several places, and their respective uses ; and whether we look at the rich variety of vegetation, or gaze upward at the starry sky at night, and see how even there “ one star differeth from another in glory,”—we learn the same truth,—that God sees it wisest and best that all should *not* be equal, but that there should be diversity amongst His creatures ; that some should occupy a lower, and others a higher place, and yet, that all should be united in one beautiful system, one harmonious whole. But it is quite time for us to return to the history.

I told you that during Richard's childhood, his three uncles ruled the kingdom for him as his guardians ; when, however, he grew older, he began to dislike subjection to their authority, and determined to act and govern for himself. The Duke of Lancaster, John of Gaunt, went into Spain with an army, in order to claim the crown of Castile in right of his wife, the daughter of the king of that country ; and he was absent three years. During this time, the Duke of Gloucester acted in a very improper manner, first, by tyrannizing over the king ; and then, when Richard made efforts to get the power which belonged to him into his own hands, by forming plots and conspiracies against him of a very dangerous nature. Richard commanded the Duke to be seized, and conveyed to Calais ; and while there, he was murdered, as was supposed, by order of the king himself.

Not long after this, a quarrel took place between two very important persons,—the Duke of Norfolk, and Henry Bolingbroke Duke of Hereford, the son of John of Gaunt. The Duke of Hereford accused Norfolk of having spoken against the king ; this Norfolk denied, and summoned Hereford to fight with him in single combat, which was the way of deciding such quarrels usually in those days. The parties appeared accordingly in the field ;

but just as they were about to fight, Richard himself commanded them to lay down their arms, and sentenced them both to banishment,—Norfolk for life, and Hereford for ten years. John of Gaunt died while his son was away, and Richard unjustly seized upon his riches and estates, which rightly belonged to Henry Bolingbroke, who became now, by his father's death, Duke of Lancaster. This act of the king made the new Duke exceedingly angry. He returned from banishment before the term of ten years had expired, raised an army in the North, which continually increased as he passed through England, and marched forward, secretly determined perhaps either to induce Richard to resign his crown, or forcibly to take it from him ; but he did not give utterance to these views at first.

Richard was, at this time, in Ireland, but as soon as he heard of the insurrection, he hastened back, and found the country in a sad state indeed. He brought with him a large army, but soon the greater part deserted him, and he retired to the island of Anglesea with about six thousand men, there to wait for some opportunity either of escaping, or of bringing back his subjects to obedience and legality. And now Henry sent to him the Earl of Northumberland, and he, by fair speeches and false professions of submission,

deceived the unhappy king, got him into his power, and carried him a prisoner to Henry. Richard was taken to London, and there was soon frightened into a resignation of the crown ; but this Henry thought would not be sufficient to secure the possession of it for himself ; so he drew up a number of accusations or charges against the king, and laid them before the Parliament. And sad it is to say, that the very men who owed allegiance to Richard, and ought to have defended him faithfully from Henry's unjust usurpation, all, with one exception, assented to those charges, and declared Richard deposed. The only man loyal and faithful enough to stand up for his king on this occasion, was the Bishop of Carlisle. He protested strongly against the unrighteous act of the Parliament ; and for thus doing his duty, he was immediately arrested by Henry, and sent as a prisoner to the abbey of St. Albans.

The throne was now vacant, and Henry having asserted his right to succeed to it, was declared king by the Lords and Commons. The unhappy Richard was conveyed to Pontefract Castle in Yorkshire, where he was shortly after murdered, as there is every reason to believe, though it is uncertain in what way the cruel deed was performed. He was only thirty-four years old, and had reigned



twenty-two ; and he left no children to inherit either his prosperity or his misfortunes.

Fair laughs the morn, and soft the zephyr blows ;  
While, proudly riding o'er the azure realm,  
In gallant trim the gilded vessel goes ;  
Youth at the prow, and pleasure at the helm ;  
Regardless of the sweeping whirlwind's sway,  
That hush'd in grim repose, expects his evening prey.

Such was the bright beginning, and such the mournful end, of the "sable warrior's" son.

Before we go on to the reign of Henry IV. I wish to tell you of two remarkable persons who lived at this time, to whom we are indebted for certain improvements in literature, and more particularly in religion. The first I will mention is Geoffrey Chaucer. He is usually called the Father of English poetry, because he so greatly improved the harmony of our verse and metre ; though, in these modern days, we may find it difficult, at first sight, to comprehend the meaning even of Chaucer's lines, with their ancient spelling, and their sometimes quaint ideas. You will however, I dare say, like to read a specimen of his verses, that you may see what poetry was in England at the close of the fourteenth century.

A good man ther was of religioun,  
That was a poure persone of a toun :  
But riche he was of holy thought and werk.  
He was also a lerned man, a clerk,

That Christes gospel trewly wolde preche.  
 His parishens devoutly wolde he teche.  
 Benigne he was, and wondrous diligent,  
 And in adversite ful patient.  
 He waited after no pompe ne reverence,  
 Ne maked him no spiced conscience,  
 But Christes lore, and his apostles twelve,  
 He taught, but first he folwed it himselve.

The other person I mean to tell you about, was Wickliffe, whose name no doubt sounds familiarly in your ears, as you may remember that he was the first great English reformer. And here I must remind you of the sad state of ignorance, and error, and superstition, in which religion then was, that you may see how much it needed to be reformed, and so may better understand and appreciate the labours of Wickliffe.

The Pope was then the acknowledged head of the Church; and you have already seen enough of the consequences of the great power he possessed, to make you understand how dangerous that power was when exercised either in the church or state.—The worship of saints and images was practised, in direct opposition to the plain and express precepts and commands of scripture.—The Bible was considered insufficient as a rule of faith, and a number of human traditions were taught as if of equal authority and importance.—The worship of the host, or consecrated wafer, and the belief

in Transubstantiation, or the change of the bread in the Lord's Supper into the body of Christ, and many more errors equally foolish and dangerous, had, by degrees, crept into the church ; all of them contrary to the pure word of God, which was little known, and less understood, by the people of England in those dark ages.—Such a state of things, you will clearly understand, needed *reformation*.

We do not know much about the early life of Wickliffe. It seems, however, that the study of God's word opened his eyes to see the corruptions and errors which had spread around ; and when he knew the truth himself, he naturally and rightly desired to make it known to others ; and this he did both by his preaching and his writings. When it was known that Wickliffe was teaching what were new and heretical doctrines, the heads of the church became alarmed, and they summoned him to appear before them in an assembly or synod held at St. Paul's in London. A great many people were there,—bishops, nobles, and others ; and amongst them was John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, the father of Henry Bolingbroke, of whom we have just been reading. I need not tell you all the opinions of Wickliffe—the so-called heresies—of which he was accused before this assembly. I will mention only a few of the principal of them. He

believed that Christ only, and not the Pope of Rome, was the head of the church. That it was wrong to worship saints and images. That the Bible was the only rule of faith. That the bread in the Lord's Supper was not changed into the body of Christ; and that to worship it was nothing less than idolatry.

Notwithstanding all the opposition of the Bishops and others to such opinions, Wickliffe was allowed to leave the assembly that day with only an admonition to teach these doctrines no more. But this good man felt as the apostles did, when, in the times of their persecution, they were forbidden to teach or to preach in the name of Jesus. He felt that he could not but teach the things which he believed, from the testimony of Scripture itself, to be true; and he knew that it was his duty to obey God rather than man; and accordingly we find that, first in Oxford, and afterwards at his living of Lutterworth in Leicestershire, he continued to declare those truths boldly and faithfully.

What I have just told you, about Wickliffe appearing in the synod of St. Paul's, happened in the time of Edward III. In Richard II's reign, he was again summoned before the archbishop of Canterbury at Lambeth. And now indeed Wickliffe was in danger. It seemed as if his faithful teaching was to be silenced

for ever by his enemies, and that he was no more to be allowed to preach the pure doctrines of the Bible. But it was now so ordered, in the good providence of God, that, just before the expected examination, a gentleman stepped into the assembly, and with authority from the higher powers of the kingdom, commanded that Wickliffe should be proceeded against no further ; and so this valuable minister of the gospel was again dismissed uninjured. And the care which had hitherto watched over Wickliffe, continued to do so even to the end of his life ; for he was suffered to continue preaching undisturbed ; and to accomplish his great work of translating the Bible, the *whole Bible*, into the English language. He died in peace, and was buried in the quiet church-yard of his own beloved parish. Even in those dark and ignorant times, God had raised up friends and protectors for his faithful servant. One of these was the Duke of Lancaster, and another was Richard's Queen, Anne of Bohemia, who was so much beloved and respected by the people that she was called by them the good Queen Anne. She had heard and approved the doctrines which Wickliffe taught, and used her influence to procure his safety and security, and we may hope that her kindness towards him was not merely the effect of a naturally amiable disposition, but of a real love for the

great truths which he had so faithfully preached.

But days of persecution were drawing on. The storm was indeed happily withheld during Wickliffe's life, but, in the succeeding reign, we shall see how heavily it fell upon his disciples and followers. And now, before we leave the history of our first reformer, I will anticipate a few years, and describe a scene,—a sad scene,—which took place about thirty years after his death.

Let us suppose ourselves to be standing in the peaceful church-yard of Lutterworth. There is Wickliffe's grave. Many years his body has been crumbling into dust, and his happy soul has long since mingled with "the spirits of just men made perfect" in a world of eternal joy. And as we gaze on that tomb, our thoughts go forward, in bright anticipation, to the day when the graves shall be opened, and when the dead within them "shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and shall come forth." So, we think, shall it be with that holy man whose remains now lie slumbering there, resting in peace until the resurrection morn. But no;—persecution has not yet done its work with Wickliffe. It cannot indeed inflict upon him pain, or sorrow, or death;—he is out of the reach of these for ever. But persecution will still do what it

can. It will dishonour even the bones of that departed saint, and treat them with scorn and contempt, if there is no other way of showing hatred to the doctrines he had taught. The decree of persecution against Wickliffe's followers has gone forth, and even the reformer's bones cannot be suffered to lie undisturbed in their quiet resting-place. His enemies come to his grave; they tear open his coffin; they collect the few poor remains which are still to be seen there, and cast them, in angry scorn, into the fire, and burn them to ashes. Then they take those ashes, and throw them into the Swift, a neighbouring brook, that they may for ever be rid of the last remembrance of Wickliffe, and that his name may pass away from the face of the earth. Ah, it is a poor revenge; and a vain attempt indeed to check the spread of God's truth in the world, or to cause His servant to be forgotten! "The righteous shall be had in everlasting remembrance;" and those who honour God, He declares He will honour; and so, notwithstanding the efforts of his enemies, Wickliffe's name has descended from generation to generation, loved and venerated in this and in other countries also, by all who value the truth. And as to the doctrine he preached, it has been well said by an old writer, when speaking of the dishonour which

the reformer's enemies cast upon his ashes, by throwing them into the Swift,—“This brook hath conveyed his ashes into Avon; Avon into Severn; Severn into the narrow seas, they into the main ocean. And thus the ashes of Wickliffe are the emblem of his doctrine which now is dispersed all the world over.”



## XXII. AN ILL-GOTTEN CROWN.

A.D. 1399—1422.

Heaven knows, my son,  
By what by-paths, and indirect crook'd ways,  
I met this crown ; and I myself know well,  
How troublesome it sat upon my head.  
It seem'd to me,  
But as an honour snatch'd with boisterous hand :  
And I had many living to upbraid  
My gain of it by their assistances ;  
Which daily grew to quarrel and to bloodshed,  
Wounding supposed peace ; all these bold fears,  
Thou see'st, with peril I have answered :  
For all my reign hath been but as a scene  
Acting that argument.—SHAKESPEARE.

ALTHOUGH these lines, supposed to be spoken by Henry IV. on his death-bed, are poetry, and not history, yet there can be no doubt that some such reflections passed through the mind of that king when the close of life led him to think, and to mourn over the crimes and follies of his former years. That life was by no means a long one ; and it was full of turmoil and perplexity, giving him abundant

reason to say of the crown which he had obtained,

How troublesome it sat upon my head.

An insurrection took place in England very soon after Henry ascended the throne, and to quell this, much blood was shed, and many lives were sacrificed. Henry tried two ways of securing himself in the kingdom, he exercised severity towards those who opposed him, and he endeavoured to conciliate and please those who would be useful to him. When the rebellion therefore was quieted, he determined to ingratiate himself with the clergy; and sad indeed were the means he adopted to secure this object.

The spread of Wickliffe's opinions among the people, began to occasion great alarm among the heads of the Church, who still clung to the errors of the papal system; and Henry knew it would be a popular measure to enact a law for the suppression and punishment of the Lollards,—for so the followers of Wickliffe were now called, probably from the name of Walter Lollardus, who flourished in Germany, some years before Wickliffe's time, and whose opinions were similar to those of our English reformer.

Instead therefore of imitating the example of his father, John of Gaunt, and protecting those who held the doctrines of Wickliffe,

Henry made a law, that any heretic who refused to abjure his opinions, should be delivered over to the secular arm, and committed to the flames ! This was the first time such cruel measures had been adopted in England ; but the law, once made, continued in exercise for many years after, and hundreds of faithful martyrs perished at the stake for their zeal and constancy to the truth. The first of them fell in this very reign ;—his name was Sautre.

The doctrines Sautre was accused of holding, and for which he suffered, were principally these,—that it was idolatry to worship the cross, and that the consecrated bread in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper was not changed into the body of Christ. It is said, that when Sautre was first accused, fear of the dreadful consequence of persisting in his opinions, led him to abjure the doctrines which he had previously professed. Like Peter, he was thus tempted to deny his Master's cause, but, like Peter too, he repented, and proved the sincerity of repentance by yielding up his life for the truth's sake. It required indeed no small measure of faith and trust in God, boldly to confess the truth in those times, when death itself, and a death so dreadful, was the penalty.

In the following year, Sautre was again accused of persisting in heretical opinion ; now he made no attempt to deny the

for his faith and confidence had grown stronger, and like those of old of whom we read, he was enabled to witness a good confession before his enemies. He was then degraded from his office of priest, and given up to the arm of the law, and so ended his life in the flames. Thus perished,—not strictly speaking, the first martyr in England; for that honourable title, you will remember, belongs to Alban, who had sealed his testimony to the truth with his blood many centuries before. But Sautre was the first martyr who died in this country under *Papal* persecution. Both he and Alban fell in the same cause,—for refusing to commit the same sin, the sin of idolatry,—whether by sacrificing to an idol, or by worshipping a cross, or a consecrated wafer; and both are entitled to be remembered with honour, by all who in this land love the truth for which they so nobly suffered.

But let us now return to Henry, and see what difficulties next obstructed him in his course. Fresh disturbances soon came upon him. The first insurrection was quickly followed by another in Wales, headed by a brave, high-spirited man named Glendower, who was descended from the ancient Welsh princes. Besides this, there was a rebellion also in Scotland, of which the Earl Douglas was the leader. In the battles and fighting which these

various disturbances occasioned, Henry was at first assisted by the Earl of Northumberland, who, you will recollect, had at first aided him in his efforts to obtain the crown. But friendships of the kind which existed between Henry and Northumberland, could not be expected to be very firm and enduring ; for it was a union formed only for selfish ends,—ends wrong in themselves, and accomplished by wrong means. And so Henry soon found that the very men who had helped him to the crown, were ready afterwards “to upbraid” his “gain of it by their assistances.” Northumberland expected that Henry should show him a great deal of attention on account of his services ; and Henry felt jealous of the Earl, and was unwilling to acknowledge his own obligations ; and so disagreements came on between them, which ended at last in open warfare.

Northumberland had taken Earl Douglas prisoner ; and Henry sent orders to him not to release his prisoners for ransom. This Northumberland thought he had a right to do ; so he did not attend to Henry’s commands but set Douglas at liberty, made an alliance with him, entered into correspondence with Glendower, and roused all his friends to join him in arms against the king. When Henry heard of this rebellion, he prepared for hostilities.

lities immediately; and a battle was fought by himself and his gallant son against the rebels at Shrewsbury. In this battle, young Percy, Northumberland's son, (Harry Hotspur as he was called on account of his bravery,) was slain; and the victory was gained by the king's party. Northumberland himself had been prevented from joining in this battle by illness; but when he recovered, and heard of the defeat at Shrewsbury, he went submissively to Henry, endeavoured to excuse his conduct, and obtained pardon from the king. But this apparent reconciliation did not last long. In a short time after, Northumberland was again in rebellion, and his death in battle freed Henry from this once useful assistant, but now dreaded enemy.

The death of Northumberland, and that of Glendower also, which followed soon after, seemed to set Henry free from those difficulties by which he had been so long annoyed; and perhaps he now began to expect quiet and peace, and hoped to wear the crown with more ease during the remainder of his days. But though Henry was still in the prime of life, the turmoils and anxieties he had suffered had rendered him prematurely old. And there was another cause for uneasiness, which disturbed Henry's mind during the later years of his reign. This was the conduct of his eldest

son,—young Prince Henry. We have heard of him already, as the brave assistant of his father in the battle of Shrewbury ;—and brave and generous he certainly was. But he was also, at this time, wild and thoughtless, and instead of attending to things worthy of a prince expecting one day to be a king, he was usually to be seen with companions as idle as himself, engaged in some foolish or mischievous frolic. And these frolics occasionally ended in a manner very discreditable to any one, and more particularly to the Prince of Wales, who ought to have set an example of propriety and good conduct to other young men in the kingdom, instead of encouraging them, as he did, in folly and crime.


It happened one day, that a companion of Henry was brought before chief justice Sir William Gascoigne for some misconduct. Henry, in his zeal for his friend, attempted to interfere for his release, and in the heat of the moment, actually struck the judge in the court, where he was endeavouring to do his duty, and to carry out the laws of his country. The judge was too strict and too just to allow such conduct as young Henry's to pass unpunished, and he therefore sent him to prison for his improper behaviour, as if he had been any ordinary offender. A sad disgrace indeed to a king's son ! No doubt the Prince felt it

to be so ; but his good sense taught him that he deserved it, and that the magistrate was only acting consistently with justice in inflicting the punishment ; so without any expression of angry feeling, he submitted quietly to his imprisonment. And painful as this affair must have been to the king, it yet showed him two things which were gratifying to him as a sovereign and as a father ;—that he had at least one man among his servants who was not afraid of doing his duty ; and that his son, wild and thoughtless as he was, had yet some sense of justice, and some good feeling, to submit in the manner he had done to the sentence of Sir William Gascoigne. It is said, that when Henry heard what had taken place, he exclaimed, “ Happy is the king who has a magistrate firm enough to execute the laws upon such an offender, and who has a son willing to submit to the punishment which those laws inflict ! ”—The young prince was so far from cherishing any ill will towards his judge, that, from that time, he took every opportunity of showing him all the respect in his power.

Now I think we have in this story, a fine example of conscientious discharge of duty in Sir W. Gascoigne ;—an illustration of those precepts which the Bible has laid down for magistrates :—“ Thou shalt not respect the



person of the poor, nor honour the person of the mighty ; but in righteousness shalt thou judge thy neighbour." "Thou shalt not wrest judgment ; thou shalt not respect persons, neither take a gift." And we have an example too, of the manner in which reproof and punishment should be received, in the behaviour of Prince Henry.—Young people in these days are apt to commit faults and follies, not indeed quite of the same kind as those which Prince Henry committed, but yet faults and follies still. And the providence of God has appointed parents, and teachers, and guardians, to watch over the young, and He commands them to reprove and to correct acts of foolishness and of sin in those under their care. Now what a happy thing it would be, if children in general received these necessary reproofs and corrections more in the spirit of young Prince Henry,—not submitting with murmuring and sullenness at first, nor cherishing angry and revengeful feelings afterwards, —but regarding their reprovers as really their kindest and best friends, and endeavouring to receive their admonitions, so as to be the better for them in the time to come.—"The ear that heareth the reproof of life, abideth among the wise. He that refuseth correction despiseth his own soul ; but he that obeyeth reproof getteth understanding."



And now we draw to the close of Henry's life. He had long been gradually sinking from the effects of sorrow and anxiety, and at last he found that death itself was approaching. There are one or two little incidents related of his dying hours, which we will not pass over, for they have, I think, a salutary lesson to teach us.

It is said, that one day, as the king lay exhausted and insensible upon his bed, the young prince came into his chamber. He stood awhile gazing upon his dying father; it seemed to him that there was no breath in that feeble emaciated body; and he believed that the spirit had already fled. On the pillow lay the crown,—that crown which Henry found so “troublesome,” and yet to which he still so fondly clung, that even by night it was his custom to place it beside him, lest any one should deprive him of it while he slept. So there it lay—even on his death-bed. Prince Henry, as I said, imagined that his father was dead, and that the crown now belonged to himself as his son and heir; and as he looked on it, a multitude of thoughts, half sad, half pleasurable, rushed into his mind;—his past conduct, his future responsibility as king; his hopes, his fears, his wishes,—oh, what a variety of feelings filled the heart of the young prince as he gazed upon the crown, and upon his

dying father. Our great poet has supposed him to have expressed those feelings in the following lines.

My gracious lord, my father !  
This sleep is sound indeed ; this is a sleep,  
That from this golden regal hath divorc'd  
So many English kings. Thy due, from me,  
Is tears, and heavy sorrows of the blood,  
Which nature, love, and filial tenderness,  
Shall, O dear father, pay thee plenteously.  
My due, from thee, is this imperial crown,  
Which, as immediate from thy place and blood,  
Derives itself to me.

And then, we may picture to ourselves young Henry gently removing the crown from its accustomed place on the pillow, and placing it on his own brow, as if to try how *he* could bear it, and whether it would rest more easily upon him than it had done upon the king who had now laid it aside for ever. Having done this, the prince left the room. Soon after, the king awoke from his state of insensibility, and his first thought was of his crown. He looked for it in the accustomed place, on the pillow beside him ;—it was not there, it was gone,—where ? Who could so cruelly have robbed him of his earthly honours, at such an hour as that ? He was told that the Prince of Wales had taken it ; and then the king, in great distress, sent for his son in haste, and enquired what could have induced him to steal

that, which, in a few hours, might rightfully become his own. Young Henry was much affected; he declared, with tears, the mistake he had made in supposing his father to be dead; he described the sad feelings of his heart at that moment; and then gently restoring the crown to its place beside the dying king, he expressed a hope that it might please God to spare him to wear it many years longer. But this was a vain hope. A few brief hours were all that remained for Henry now. He cordially forgave his son, blessed him with much tenderness, and then told him, from his own past experience, of the troubles and anxieties connected with that crown so unjustly acquired; and said, he trusted that, as it would descend to his son more rightfully, so it might be worn by him with more ease and comfort. So ended this affecting scene; a few more hours passed, and the king's mortal career closed for ever!

Young Henry succeeded to the vacant throne without any opposition. And yet, when the wise and thoughtful people of the country remembered his wildness and folly as Prince of Wales, they almost trembled to think of him as king Henry V. But, like another sovereign who will probably recur to your minds, Henry wisely determined with his new office to commence a new character. So he dismissed all

his former associates, and threatened them with his displeasure if they continued their previous bad conduct ; he assembled about him those who were older and wiser than himself, that he might receive the benefit of their advice and instruction ; and he showed particular respect to the chief justice, Sir W. Gascoigne, applauding him for his past discharge of duty, and exhorting him to persevere in the same course of truth and justice. All these were indeed good beginnings of a reign ; and the people were as pleased as they were surprised to see young Henry acting with so much candour and discretion. He gratified them too still more by the grief which he expressed for the sad end of the unfortunate Richard, and by celebrating his funeral rites with proper respect and feeling ; and besides this, he consoled the family of Northumberland by restoring their rightful estates, of which Henry IV. had deprived them on account of the Earl's rebellion. All these generous acts made Henry at once beloved and popular ; this was the natural reward of his conduct ; and then he must have had too the comfort of feeling in his own mind that he was acting rightly,—a feeling worth far more than the most brilliant crown, or the most powerful kingdom that ever sovereign possessed.

The cruel laws against the Lollards were

still in force. The leader of their party at this time was Sir John Oldcastle, Lord Cobham, who had much distinguished himself, especially by his military talents. He was however considered a dangerous man by the opposite party, on account of the influence he had among the people; and he was represented as such to the king by the archbishop of Canterbury, whose great desire was to suppress the Lollards as much as possible. Henry wished rather to lead Cobham to renounce his opinions by gentle means; but as these were unavailing, the law was suffered to take its course. Cobham was accused of treason as well as of heresy, and put to a death of peculiar cruelty, being hung in chains, and then roasted alive before a slow fire.

The name of Henry V. is always associated in English history with France, because it was in that country that he passed the most brilliant portion of his reign. At this time, France was in a state of great internal tumult and confusion. The king, Charles VI., was so weak in mind as to be unable to manage his affairs himself; and the government had fallen into the hands of his uncles the Dukes of Burgundy and Orleans, who were continually struggling for power, and constant disputes took place between the different parties into which the country was split. When Henry

heard of these circumstances, he determined to take advantage of them, and turn them to his own benefit. So first, he proposed to make an alliance with the French, upon conditions to which they were unable to accede; and then, having assembled an army, he went to France, determined, if possible, to conquer the country for himself. I need not describe to you the sieges and battles which took place at this period, nor the unhappy state to which France was reduced by internal dissensions. But I must not forget to tell you of one great victory of Henry—that of Agincourt—which is usually ranked in splendour with those of Cressy and Poitiers, gained, as you remember, by Edward III. and the Black Prince, in the same country. The career of Henry in France was a very prosperous one; and it ended by a treaty of peace being formed between the two countries, in which it was agreed that Henry should marry Catherine, the daughter of the French king; that Charles should possess the crown during his life; that when he died, Henry's heirs should succeed to the dominion of France, and that the two countries should be governed by one and the same sovereign, though each was to enjoy its own peculiar privileges, manners, and customs. This treaty was called the treaty of Troye, from a town of that name, where it was signed by the two

parties who agreed to it—Henry V. and the Duke of Burgundy.

France was, however, as yet far from being under Henry's power. When his son was born, the people indeed hailed him as the future heir of France as well as of England; but then Charles had a son also, who was no party to the treaty of Troye, and who might be disposed to fight for his crown in opposition to Henry.

But in the midst of all his plans and projects, Henry was unexpectedly seized with an illness which soon ended his bright prospects of the future, by the sudden termination of his life. When he found that he was dying, he called for his brothers, the Dukes of Gloucester and Bedford, and gave them several directions about the government both of England and France; and then, having settled his worldly affairs, he remembered that he had matters more important to be attended to than even those of his kingdom;—matters which he now felt he had too long neglected. He was soon going to leave all his earthly possessions, and to enter another world of which he had thought very little during his course of prosperity, when health and long life seemed to be before him. So he called to the priests who were standing around his bed, and desired them to repeat to him the penitential Psalms. As they repeated all those solemn



verses, he listened very attentively without speaking, till they came to the close of the 51st Psalm—and read the words, “Build thou the walls of Jerusalem;” and then he interrupted them, and said, that it had been his intention, as soon as the French war should end, to go to the Holy Land, and conquer the Saracens, and set Jerusalem free. Poor Henry! These were almost his last words; and sad it is to think, that while he had fought so bravely for an earthly crown, and an earthly inheritance, he should have put off, to the very last, any thought of securing “a crown of immortality,” and “an inheritance that fadeth not away.” Perhaps he fancied, like many other people, that good intentions are quite enough to satisfy the conscience, and give peace, and ensure safety on a dying bed. Perhaps he vainly thought that the good deed of delivering Jerusalem, which he hoped to accomplish, would atone for many an act of cruelty, and for a whole life of sin; and when he found he could not do this, then he comforted himself with the idea that he had intended,—he had meant to do it. Ah, it was but a vain imagination after all,—that to set Jerusalem free was an act that had merit in it, and would make him acceptable in the sight of God! Here then we must close the melancholy history of king Henry V.,—for melan-

choly it was, notwithstanding all his victories, and all his success in France. But before we pass on, let us learn these two lessons: first, that there is only one thing that can give peace to the conscience, real, true peace,—and that is, the feeling that we have sought and obtained pardon from God, in the only way in which it can be obtained; and secondly, that the time for doing what we have to do, for the good either of ourselves or others, is the *present* time; because life is uncertain to us, just as it was to the king we have been talking of, who was cut off in the midst of all his plans and projects; and therefore, whatsoever our hand findeth to do, we should do it with our might, for there is no knowledge, nor wisdom, nor device, in the grave whither we are going.

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## XXIII. THE WARS OF THE ROSES.

A.D. 1422—1483.

Look on thy country, look on fertile France,  
And see the cities and the towns defac'd  
By wasting ruin of the cruel foe!  
As looks the mother on her lowly babe,  
When death doth close his tender, dying eyes,  
See, see, the pining malady of France;  
Behold the wounds, the most unnatural wounds,  
Which thou thyself hast given her woful breast!  
O, turn thy edged sword another way;  
Strike those that hurt, and hurt not those that help!  
One drop of blood drawn from thy country's bosom,  
Should grieve thee more than streams of foreign gore.  
Return thee, therefore, with a flood of tears,  
And wash away thy country's stained spots.

SHAKESPEARE.

HENRY VI. was quite an infant when his father died, and so, for many years, the government both of England and France was carried on by his uncles, the Duke of Gloucester, and the Duke of Bedford. The little king, you remember, had been acknowledged, at his birth, heir of France as well as of England, according to the treaty of Troye; and yet in no



very long time after, the French possessions were nearly all lost to this country, and the splendid victories of Henry V. were of no more use to his successor, than those of Edward III. had been to the king who reigned after *him*. I am going to tell you how this happened; and I must begin by mentioning some very extraordinary things which took place in France soon after the death of Henry V.

The king of France of whom you heard in the last chapter, was now dead; and his son, who was also called Charles, had taken no part in all the arrangements about the succession which had been made between Henry V. and the Duke of Burgundy. So, of course, he naturally wished to regain the dominions which of right belonged to him; but then, how could he do this? That was the difficulty. The English had already conquered a great many places in France; they were at this time besieging the city of Orleans; and the poor inhabitants were so distressed for want of provisions, that it was likely they would soon be obliged to give way, and then the English would enter, and take possession of the city. All these things looked very unpromising; and young Charles was in an almost hopeless condition, when help came to him in a very remarkable and unexpected manner.

There lived at that time in a little village in

France, a young woman called Joan d'Arc. She was a servant in an inn : poor and ignorant, but quiet and well-behaved ; and no one supposed that there was anything in her at all remarkable or uncommon. But it often happens, that the characters and talents of people are not known until particular circumstances call them out, and bring them into action ; and so it was in the case of Joan d'Arc. She loved her country ; and you may imagine therefore how sad she felt when, from time to time, she heard of the English and their invasion ;—how they were besieging Orleans, and how the poor people in that city were suffering from want of food ; and then she thought of young Charles, her rightful king, and wished that he were on the throne, and that the English were far away where they could no more disturb the peace of France. Joan thought of these things so much, that at last she almost forgot to think of any thing else. She would often sit for a long time together, quite abstracted from all around her, meditating upon her country's sorrows, and wondering if she could do anything to relieve them.

Now, you may think it quite impossible that a poor girl like Joan should be able, in any way, to help either her king, or her country ; and perhaps she thought so too at first. But you have not forgotten, I hope, what I once

told you,—that even the youngest, the least, the meanest, may do something to assist those who are much older and wiser than themselves, if they only *try* and *persevere*. The more Joan thought, the more determined she became to try what she could do. She was naturally clever, and bold, and fearless, and active, and these qualities helped her first to form projects, and afterwards, as we shall soon see, to carry them out. So she went to the governor of the city near which she lived, and told her wishes to him. But he was not much disposed to attend to her. It seemed to him a wild and foolish thing for a girl to attempt to do what Joan had planned ; but she talked to him so earnestly and so solemnly, that at last he began to believe that, after all, some use might be made of Joan ; so he sent her, with a few attendants, to Charles's court.

It must have been very strange indeed, to see this young peasant girl going in boldly to her sovereign, and offering to help him to defend his country ! No doubt, Charles and his friends were very much astonished, and yet they were, notwithstanding, inclined to listen to what Joan had to say. So she told them, that she felt herself commissioned, by God himself, to deliver France, and she promised, if Charles would only follow her directions, to force the English to give up the siege

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of Orleans, and to conduct him to Rheims, to be there crowned and anointed king. Wonderful as this was, Charles determined to attend to what Joan had said. He gave her full permission to do as she pleased, and to lead the army according to her own will. So she was armed from head to foot, like a soldier, and mounted on horseback ; the army was assembled, and she undertook to be their leader. First, she was to go to Orleans ; but before she did this, she wrote to the English generals there, commanding them, in the name of God, to give up the siege, and to retire from France. But, as might be expected, they only despised such a message as this, and wondered how Charles could be so weak and foolish as to entrust the command of his army to a young ignorant girl. Joan therefore marched with her soldiers towards Orleans. When the English saw her coming, they were surprised, and alarmed too. There was something altogether so remarkable in Joan, that they began to think that what she had said might really be true, and that she was indeed acting under the command and inspiration of God. Superstitious feelings mingled with, and added to their fears.

I need not tell you all that happened on *that* memorable day ; but so it was, that very *soon* Joan, partly by her clever management,

and partly by the surprise and fear which filled the minds of the hostile army, not only entered the city, but compelled the English to withdraw ; and thus she accomplished the first part of her promise to Charles,—she forced the enemy to give up the siege of Orleans. And she performed the second part of her promise also. She told him, that the time was now come for him to be made king ; so she conducted him to Rheims, and there, in the presence of his courtiers, and many of his people, and with Joan standing by his side, with her banner in her hand, he was crowned and anointed king. Then the Maid of Orleans, for so she was now called, fell down at his feet, and congratulated him on his wonderful success with tears of joy.—A bright and a happy day was that at Rheims.

Joan, having performed both her promises, very humbly and modestly offered to return to her former home and occupations. But she was persuaded to fight on still, until she had quite driven out the English from France ; so she made another attack upon them, and at first she was successful. Her success however did not last long. She was closely pressed by the enemy, and obliged to retreat ; her own party deserted her in her danger, and left her exposed to the assaults of the foe ; and after *resisting* very bravely for a long time, she was



taken prisoner, and fell into the power of the Duke of Bedford.

And now we come to the sad part of the story. A just and generous man would have treated Joan with respect and compassion, even though she was an enemy and a prisoner; for he would have remembered, that all she had done was for the defence of her king and her country, and he would have appreciated the feelings which would lead a young peasant girl to risk her life in battle from such a motive as this. But poor Joan had fallen into the hands of those who were neither just nor generous. They summoned a tribunal to judge and pass sentence upon her; she was accused before that tribunal, of crimes of which she was quite innocent, particularly of sorcery and witchcraft; and sentenced to imprisonment for life. But this cruel sentence was afterwards changed into one more cruel still, and the brave Maid of Orleans was actually burnt to death in the city of Rouen, in the midst of her countrymen, who had so recently beheld her assisting at the coronation of their king.

A wonderful and a sad story is this of the brave, the unfortunate Joan d'Arc. And now, what shall we say about her? Her career was a very extraordinary one, and I need hardly tell you, that her conduct, however much it may be admired, is yet not to be imi-

tated. God has appointed us all our different stations and occupations in life ; and if we leave them, and choose others which He has *not* appointed, we cannot expect His blessing, and therefore we shall not promote our own happiness. But then though this is the case, as a general rule, there may be times and seasons when certain persons are called upon to act in a manner very different from that which would be right and proper in ordinary circumstances. No doubt Joan thought that her situation was of this peculiar kind. Whether it was so or not, it may be difficult to decide ; but at all events, when we read her history, we should not blame her for her actions, but rather admire her for the loyal and patriotic motives which led to those actions, and mourn over the sad treatment she received from her cruel enemies.

The Duke of Bedford did not live many years after the events in France of which we have just been speaking ; and by degrees the English lost, as I told you before, all the possessions they had acquired in that country, except Calais ; they therefore withdrew their army, and returned home. And here we have another instance of the vanity and uncertainty of earthly things. Many lives, and much time, and labour, and money, had been sacrificed in the war with France, and what had they

gained ? Only a little fame, a little glory ; a few possessions hardly acquired, and hardly retained ; and then all passed away ; and the very men who had fought for these perishing things, they passed away also ; and we might say of their efforts to obtain happiness and honour, what Solomon said of his—"Vanity of vanities ; all is vanity."

But it is time for us to go back to the young King Henry VI ; who, during all these years, had been growing up, and was now arrived at man's estate. His disposition was gentle and amiable, but he had not much strength of mind, and was not very capable of managing the affairs of his kingdom. He had been married to a French princess named Margaret of Anjou, a very high-spirited and clever woman, who was quite disposed to rule for her husband, and to fight his battles for him when necessary ; and for many years she acted a very conspicuous part in the history of this reign, as we shall see by and bye. You may easily suppose that different parties would arise in the country, and that there would be a good deal of disputing and rivalry, when the government was headed by so weak a king as Henry ; and such was indeed the case.

And now I must tell you the names of some of the principal persons concerned in the management of the country at that time, that you

may be better able to understand the history which will follow. First, there was the Duke of Gloucester, who was such a favourite with the people that they used to call him "the good Duke Humphrey." Then there was the Duke of Suffolk, who was prime minister during a part of this reign; and Cardinal Beaufort of Winchester, the King's great uncle, who had much power and authority also. These two were attached to the Queen's party, and were jealous of the Duke of Gloucester, and disliked him, because they thought he exercised too much influence over the people. It seems very strange that the virtues and popularity of any person should cause him to be hated by his fellows; and yet this is very frequently the case; and the reason of it is to be found in the pride of the human heart, that pride which makes each man wish to get above his neighbour, and which often tempts him even to try to ruin that neighbour, in order that he may raise himself through his fall. Oh, how careful we should be, in the small as well as in the great matters of life, to keep ourselves from this dangerous sin of pride!

The envy and bad feeling of the Queen's party towards this favourite of the people, ended in the death,—the supposed murder, of the Duke of Gloucester. He had been accu-

sed, without sufficient evidence, of treason, and of other crimes, by the men who were planning his ruin: and though there was much uncertainty as to the cause of his death, there was a strong suspicion that the Duke of Suffolk, the Cardinal of Winchester, and perhaps even the Queen herself, were concerned in the event. Another melancholy circumstance, which happened only a few weeks after, confirmed these suspicions. This was the death of the Cardinal. On his dying bed, he suffered much, it is said, from remorse of conscience: from the remembrance of crimes unrepented of and unpardoned, which now, in the prospect of death, and of another world, rose up before him in dreadful array. Those crimes were perhaps, many of them, unknown to man, and unpunished by human laws: but it must be a wretched kind of consolation indeed to a sinner, to reflect that he has not been condemned by his fellow-sinners, when he is just about to appear before the judgment-seat of a pure and holy God!

The dying scene of the unhappy Cardinal Beaufort is so strikingly described by the poet Shakespeare, that I think you will like to read it in the following lines. It is the Cardinal who is supposed to be speaking.

Bring me unto my trial when you will.  
Died he not in his bed? Where should he die

Can I make men live, whe'r they will or no ?  
Oh, torture me no more ; I will confess.—  
Alive again ? then show me where he is :  
I'll give a thousand pounds to look upon him.—  
He hath no eyes ; the dust hath blinded them.  
Comb down his hair ; look, look, it stands upright,  
Like lime-twigs set to catch my winged soul !—  
Give me some drink ; and bid the apothecary  
Bring the strong poison that I bought of him.

It was the voice of conscience speaking thus on the dying bed, so loudly that those around could hear, which made the by-standers believe that the cardinal was guilty of the murder of the Duke Humphrey.

But I told you, it was supposed that the Duke of Suffolk, as well as the Cardinal, had been concerned in the murder of Gloucester. This suspicion of his guilt made him exceedingly disliked by the people. Suffolk was indeed, in many respects, a bad man ; and though for a time he was suffered to remain unpunished, yet the day of retribution came at last. He was accused of various crimes,—of having acted unfaithfully in his office of prime minister, of embezzling the public money, and of other matters connected with the affairs of France. Some of these accusations might have been true ; others were perhaps false ; but Suffolk had no friends among the people to stand up in his defence, and Henry pronounced upon him a sentence of banishment *for five years*. Suffo<sup>n</sup> accordingly prepared

to leave England ; he still had the Queen's favour, and perhaps hoped that he should soon be restored through her influence. But his enemies were bent upon his destruction. They bribed the captain of the vessel in which he was to sail, to secure him, and make him prisoner ; and Suffolk was accordingly seized near Dover, his head was struck off on the side of the vessel, and his body thrown into the sea ! I think this dreadful death may remind us of some other awful declarations which we read in the Bible ;—"Be sure your sin will find you out." "The wicked shall not go unpunished."

And now we are coming to a period of English history which is always remembered as one of fighting and bloodshed ;—the period of the civil wars between the rival parties of York and Lancaster ; or as they are sometimes called, the wars of the White and Red Roses. But in order that you may understand what was the cause of these sad wars, I must first say a few words in the way of explanation. You will remember, then, that Edward III. had several sons. His successor Richard II. was the son of one of them,—our favourite hero the Black Prince ; and he was deposed, as you know, by his cousin Henry, the son of *John of Gaunt*, Duke of Lancaster, another of *Edward III.*'s children. I need hardly re-

mind you that Henry of Lancaster gained the kingdom by usurpation, not by right ; and though he contrived to keep his place on the throne, and transferred his crown to his son, and his son's son, yet now that Henry VI. showed himself to be very unlike his two predecessors, and to be a weak man, and incapable of governing, many of the people began to consider that, after all, he was not the rightful heir ; and so they became disposed to favour the claims of Richard Duke of York, who was descended from an older son of Edward III., and who had, therefore, a better title to the crown. But then there were others who thought that, as the family of Lancaster had possessed the throne so many years, it would be better for them to continue to do so in peace, than to run the risk and danger of civil war to decide the question of succession. And thus the country was divided into two parties;—the Yorkists, who favoured the claims of Richard Duke of York; and the Lancastrians,—who determined to adhere to the family of Henry of Lancaster. These two parties each adopted a badge or sign by which they might be distinguished;—that of the Yorkists was a white rose, and that of the Lancastrians was a red one; and from this circumstance the civil wars between them were called the Wars of the Roses.



These wars lasted about thirty years ; twelve dreadful battles were fought, and many lives were lost, before the matter was finally settled by the union of the two families of York and Lancaster. I am not going to give you an account of half the sad things which happened during this stormy period ; for you would soon be weary of hearing, and I of relating them. But I will tell you a few of the events connected with some of the principal battles, and that will enable you to form an idea of the state in which the country was at the time of these civil wars, and lead you to feel thankful, I hope, that your lot has been cast in more peaceful days.

The first battle fought between the two parties was in the year 1455, at St. Albans, a place which is already familiar to you as the scene of more than one event famous in English history. In this battle, the Duke of York and his friends were very successful ; they defeated the Lancastrians, and made Henry prisoner : and then the Duke took upon himself the management of the country, without allowing the king any share in the authority, although he treated him with respect and kindness. But this did not last long. Margaret, Henry's Queen, was not at all inclined to submit quietly to the loss of the kingdom ; so she got an army together, and

fought a battle against the Yorkists at Wakefield. And this battle ended very differently from that of St. Albans. The Duke of York was slain, and his party defeated; and Margaret, not contented with merely having gained a victory over an enemy now no longer able to resist her, showed much cruelty, and a sad spirit of revenge. She caused the head of the Duke to be cut off, and then put upon it a paper crown in mockery, and set it over the gates of the city of York. The Earl of Rutland too, the Duke's son, who was only seventeen years of age, was barbarously murdered by Lord Clifford, one of Margaret's friends, in revenge for the death of his father who had been slain in the battle of St. Albans. Such deeds of cruelty were unhappily too common in those days.

The Duke of York left three sons,—Edward, George, and Richard, of all of whom we shall hear more hereafter. When his father was dead, young Edward headed the Yorkist party; and he was so handsome, and so agreeable in his manners, that he won a good deal of favour on account of his appearance only, for he had very little else to recommend him, and after gaining a victory over the other side, he was chosen king by the voice of the people, in preference to Henry of Lancaster, who was deposed, and retired to Scotland. But the

Wars did not end here. Margaret determined to make another effort to regain the throne; so she went to France, and persuaded the king there to assist her; and then she returned with an increased army, and fought against Edward at Hexham. In this battle, however, the Lancastrians were again defeated, and Margaret was obliged to fly from her enemies as quickly as possible, in order to save her life, and that of her young son, Prince Edward.

The night which followed the battle of Hexham, was a dreadful one indeed for the poor queen and her helpless child. Scarcely knowing where to flee from her pursuers, she at last took refuge in a forest, hoping to conceal herself and her son among the thick trees, and to find a little shelter during the night. But there were other enemies in that forest, of whom Margaret had not thought in her anxiety to escape from the Yorkists. These were a band of robbers, who had secreted themselves in the wood, in the hope of obtaining plunder. They soon attacked Margaret. It is not likely that they guessed who the unfortunate lady was who, with her little boy, was trying to hide in that strange place in the dark night. But they thought that she might, perhaps, have something of value about her which they would like to possess themselves of: so they robbed her of her money,

and her jewels, and then began to divide their spoils. It was a rich booty they had seized, but they found it no easy matter to please themselves in the disposal of it. Each claimed the largest share; and soon a quarrel arose, and they were so taken up with their own selfish dispute, that they forgot to secure the queen, who was all this time standing by, with her poor terrified child. Margaret, however, was not soon alarmed nor cast down; and happily, her fears did not prevent her from taking this opportunity to effect her escape; so while the robbers were quarrelling, she rushed from them, and concealed herself once more in the thickest part of the forest. But Margaret's troubles and dangers were not over yet. She saw presently after, in the dim light, a man approaching her with a drawn sword in his hand. She guessed that he must be another of that terrible band of robbers, and he looked so fierce as he drew nearer to her, that she could not doubt what his intentions were. She had now no more money nor jewels with which to bribe him to spare her life, and her child's; she could not defend herself; she could not run away; what *could* she do? There seemed no hope at all; nothing but to submit to her fate, or to cast herself upon the robber's mercy. And this was what Margaret resolved upon. It was a bold determi-

nation, but she thought it was the only way of saving her life, and her child's. So she went up to the robber, looked him steadily in the face, and then presenting to him her little boy, she said,—“Here, my friend, I commit to your care the safety of the king's son.”—The man was astonished; he was a bold man, a wicked one; a robber, and perhaps a murderer; and yet there was something in the Queen's manner, and something too in the strangeness of the circumstance altogether, that struck him, and moved him to pity; for it often happens that even the worst characters have in them some little spark of feeling, which they have long tried in vain to extinguish; and now and then that little spark will kindle, and blaze up in spite of every effort made to subdue it. And so it was now. The robber felt pity for Margaret and for her child, and he promised, not only to spare their lives, but to be their friend and protector in their dangerous journey. And so he was; he safely conducted them to the sea-side, and there Margaret took leave of her generous friend, and effected her escape first to Flanders, and then to her father's court in France. And here let us leave her for the present, while we talk a little about this strange story of her adventures with the robber in the dark forest.

Now I do not think there is much for us to

imitate in the general character of Margaret of Anjou. Clever she was indeed; and able to rule and command both in peace and war. But then she was, as we have seen, cruel and revengeful, and she does not appear to have possessed those qualities which are so much more valuable in a woman,—I mean gentleness, love, and compassion. And so we will pass over that part of her character, and talk only of one quality which certainly was very useful to her, and may be useful to ourselves also, if we only try to cultivate it,—the quality of presence of mind.

And what is presence of mind? It is that kind of quiet courage which some people possess, in the moment of danger, which enables them to act with calmness and judgment, when others, who lack this quality, are so excited by fear as to be unable to exercise their powers of reason and thought at all. Now just reflect for an instant; suppose it was a time of danger, be that danger what it might, robbers, or fire, or a tremendous storm, or the attack of some wild animal,—who would be the more likely to escape from any such terrors, real or supposed, —the person so overcome with fear as to be quite unable to reason, or to think what would be the best way to meet the danger; or the person with all his wits about him, and able first to think, and then to decide, and then to

act himself, and to direct others how to act? I am sure you will answer, the latter. And I dare say you could yourselves remember instances of people who actually escaped from danger unhurt, just because they possessed and exercised this rare quality of presence of mind.

But perhaps you will say,—There can be no doubt as to its use; but then, how is it to be acquired? That is the difficulty certainly; and therefore this is a necessary enquiry to make. There are some persons who seem to have no need of acquiring presence of mind at all. They are by nature bold and fearless, just as others are by nature timid and fearful. Margaret of Anjou was one of this kind, and she showed her wisdom by using the good quality she possessed at the right time, and in the right way. It is therefore the weak and timid who most need to be advised in this matter, and supposing that you belong to that class, I will give you a hint about the way to get presence of mind, which I hope you may find useful.

Now it is fear which usually prevents people from exercising presence of mind; so the first thing for us to settle is, how we may divest ourselves of this painful feeling; and that book which we have always found so full of directions and rules upon every matter of

duty, will not leave us without assistance here. The Bible tells us the causes and the remedies of fear. And what are they? The first great cause of fear, as of all other distressing feelings, whether of mind or body, is sin. Before the Fall, there was no such thing known as what we call fear; but almost immediately after, we read of Adam saying, "I was afraid." And we have read and heard of many other instances, in which the remembrance of guilt on the conscience has filled the mind with fear, and made a person tremble even when no danger was near. But it is not wicked people only who fear. There are many who, as I said before, are naturally timid; and truly good people, I mean people who really love and serve God, may be so. Now it would be well for such to remember these two things in the time of danger; first, that whatever happens, is sent or permitted by God Himself;—by that kind Parent who feels for His children, and who would not willingly afflict or grieve them, but who does all things for their real good or benefit. And then, secondly, that as God permits dangers to come upon us sometimes, so He is always able to deliver us from them; and though He does not now protect His people by miracles from the fire, or the water, or from whatever other dangers they may be exposed to, yet He



does help them, very generally, by the right use of the means He has appointed for their deliverance; and He gives them, when they ask Him, wisdom and discretion to discover and to use those means. If people remembered all this, if they really trusted God in danger, and confidently looked to Him for strength and protection, there would be much less foolish fear, and much more real courage, and calm presence of mind, than we generally see displayed at such a time. Do you remember those words of David, in which he tells us what *his* feelings were in times of danger:—  
“The Lord is my light and salvation, whom then shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life, of whom then shall I be afraid?”

But we have wandered far away from Queen Margaret and her little boy.

The poor deposed Henry did not effect his escape so successfully as his heroic Queen had done. After wandering from place to place, in the hope of concealing himself from his enemies, he was at last seized, and given up to Edward, who confined him as a prisoner in the Tower of London. But a change, though a short one, was about to take place in the aspect of affairs. Edward had made a marriage which very much displeased one of his early supporters and friends, the Earl of Warwick, a powerful nobleman in the country at that

time, and hitherto, a strong favourer of the house of York. As Edward paid great attention to the family of the new Queen, and bestowed many favours upon them, Warwick became still more angry: and indeed, the king's conduct offended others of the Yorkist party, particularly the Duke of Clarence, Edward's youngest brother. Warwick and Clarence together joined in a rebellion against the government, and raised an army to oppose it; but not being able to carry out their scheme as they wished, they were obliged to leave the country, and retire to France. But Warwick did not remain there quietly. He soon returned with an army to oppose Edward, and took the king by surprise, so that he had only time to make his escape as quickly as possible, leaving Warwick master of the kingdom. The Earl then hastened to London, released Henry from the Tower, and caused him to be proclaimed king; only as he was considered incapable of managing the affairs of the country himself, it was arranged that Warwick and Clarence should govern for him.

Warwick's government did not continue many months. Edward was bent on revenge; so as soon as he was able to come back with an army, he fought a battle at Barnet, in which Warwick was slain; and Edward once more ascended the throne. The efforts there-

fore of the king-maker, as Warwick was called, to re-instate the unfortunate Henry, proved unsuccessful.

The very day on which the battle of Barnet was fought, Queen Margaret arrived in England with her son Prince Edward. Some years had passed away since the memorable battle of Hexham, and the adventures in the wild forest ; and now the young prince was nearly grown up, and he gave promise of becoming a brave and a generous man. But even Margaret herself, bold and courageous as she was, had lost almost all hope of ever again recovering the throne either or her husband for her son. However, she assembled her army, and determined to make one effort more to defeat the Yorkists. This battle took place at Tewkesbury. It was the most unsuccessful that Margaret had ever fought for the defence of the Lancastrian cause. Her party was entirely conquered ; her army scattered, and herself and her son were taken prisoners, and brought before king Edward and his cruel brothers. Then Edward, harshly addressing the young prince, asked him why he had dared to come and invade his dominions. The prince replied, that he had come to claim his *just inheritance* ; and this answer so enraged the king, that he barbarously struck young Edward on the face with his gauntlet. The

Dukes of Clarence and Gloucester, and two or three others of the king's party, encouraged by this cruelty to commit an act still more cruel, hurried the prince out of the room, and killed him with their daggers! Oh, what intelligence was this for the unhappy Queen Margaret,—to hear that her son, her only son, who had been the companion and sharer of her adventures and dangers, of her hopes and fears, for so many years, was now gone; and that he had died in a manner so very, very dreadful! And, perhaps, in that moment of deep sorrow, her conscience might have added another pang to what she already suffered, by recalling to her mind her own cruelty, and that of her party, to the unfortunate Duke of York and his son, after the battle of Wakefield.

The loss of young Edward was not the only one that Margaret had to deplore from the fatal battle of Tewkesbury. She was deprived of liberty herself, and thrown into the Tower. Her poor husband was still in confinement there, and a few days after, Margaret heard that he too was dead. It was a sudden death; no one imagined that it was a natural one; and the duke of Gloucester was by some supposed to have been the murderer.

I am sure you are already weary of these *scènes*; and yet we have not completed the

sad series even now ; for the death of Henry, the murder of his son, and the imprisonment of Margaret, were not sufficient to satisfy the cruelty of the hard-hearted Edward. His own brother, the duke of Clarence, was one of his next victims. No doubt Clarence was himself a bad man. He had been concerned, as we have just seen, in the murder of the young prince Edward ; but it was not that deed which excited his brother against him ; no ; it was rather the remembrance of his former rebellion in conjunction with Warwick, and the fear that he might again disturb his government and his ambitious projects ; and so Clarence, his own brother, who had once befriended, perhaps loved him, must die. He was accused of treason, declared guilty, and condemned to death. But Edward allowed him one favour, though indeed there was more cruelty than kindness in such a favour,—he allowed him to choose the way in which he would be put to death ; and it is said that Clarence's choice was to be drowned in a butt of malmesey wine, and that in this strange way the unhappy duke ended his life.

Edward IV. did not long survive his brother. While making preparations for an expedition against France, he was seized with an illness which carried him off in the prime of life, unprepared as he was for that awful

account which he was now to render of all his past deeds of cruelty and crime.

We have not yet completed the tale of horrors connected with these civil wars, but we will here end this long chapter, and reserve the remainder for another day. I will just add, in conclusion, a few lines from the poet whom we have so often quoted lately, which describe very affectingly the feelings which may be supposed to have filled Edward's mind in his last illness, in reference to the cruel execution of his brother the Duke of Clarence. He is represented as addressing his attendant nobles thus ;

Who, in my wrath,  
Kneel'd at my feet, and bade me be advis'd ?  
Who spoke of brotherhood ? Who spoke of love ?  
Who told me how the poor soul did forsake  
The mighty Warwick, and did fight for me ?  
Who told me, in the field of Tewkesbury,  
When Oxford had me down, he rescu'd me,  
And said, dear brother, live, and be a king ?  
Who told me, when we both lay in the field,  
Frozen almost to death, how he did lap me,  
E'en in his garments ; and did give himself,  
All thin and naked, to the numb-cold night ?—  
O God ! I fear, thy justice will take hold  
On me, and you, and mine, and yours, for this.

SHAKESPEARE.

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